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A MOMENT MORE AND THE IMPETUOUS GIRL IS KNEELING AT HER PARENT'S FEET.

## IN A MOMENT OF MADNESS.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

"So that is why you asked me to call, Mrs. Marvin, not through any preference or desire you have for my society, but simply to solicit my influence to further the whims and aspiration of a stage-struck young lady!"

The person to whom these words were addressed was a little fair-haired woman of nearly forty years of age. She did not, however, look more than five and twenty as she reclined gracefully on a low divan chair in her prettily furnished drawing-room, one white jewelled hand supporting her dimpled chin, the other idly caressing the soft smooth coat of a brown toy terrier lying contentedly on her silken lap.

Her visitor had not seated himself, but stood on the hearth with his back turned to the fireplace, resting one elbow on the green plush mantel board and looking down at his pretty,

smiling hostess with undisguised admiration in his keen, dark eyes.

A breath of sweet scented air came through the open window from the roses and lilies without; a gentle breeze lightly stirred the long, cream-coloured curtains, while the last rays of the setting sun streamed in with dazzling brilliancy from the western sky, filling the room and suffusing the faces of its occupants with a rich golden glow.

The gentleman who had spoken was a tall, dark man with a quantity of long straight hair, a clean shaven upper lip, and an altogether distinguishable theatrical appearance. He was in fact, the manager of a new flourishing theatre that had recently been opened in South London.

Mrs. Marvin, whose husband had been in the profession also, was now a widow with a considerable fortune of her own, and, apart from this latter attraction, was in the gay widower's eyes, a very desirable and captivating little woman.

"Pray don't put it in that way," she answered, casting down her eyes with a charming, demure air. "You know how pleased, how delighted I am to see you always. But at present I can think of nothing but that poor girl's welfare."

"Not even of me. Ah, if only I were poor, and friendless, and alone, that I might command your kind pity—touch your tender heart. As it is, I don't believe you give me a thought. But tell me what you wish me to do—tell me about this protégée of yours. Is she pretty?"

"She is more than pretty. She is lovely—with an Italian type of countenance, wonderful dark eyes and raven hair. Her mother has recently married a Presbyterian minister, who is particularly averse to his stepdaughter going on the stage. On that account, I believe, he quarrelled with her, and that is the reason why Leah left home and came to me. I don't like to encourage her to oppose the wishes of her friends; but what can I do! If I turn her out now I tremble to think what will become of her. She is much too romantic, too proud to return home, and she has no other friend in London. Besides, with her voice and appearance, I think it is a pity that she is not allowed to enter the profession for which she is so eminently fitted."

"Does her mother object?"

"I don't think so; for before her second marriage, she gave her daughter an excellent musical training; but now I have no doubt she

will be led by the opinion and wishes of her husband. At any rate, Leah—

"Is that her name?"

"Yes, Leah Casella. Is it not an uncommon name? Well, as I was saying, the girl is determined to have her own way, and resisted all my arguments with all the impetuosity and passionate fervour of youth. So at last I yielded to her entreaties and promised to ask you to call and hear her sing."

"What a sweet kind creature you are!" exclaimed the manager, as he left his position on the hearth rug, and dropped into a chair in close proximity to Mrs. Marvin. "Oh, if only my daughters could have the benefit of your loving care and influence!—if only I—but I need not tell you; you know how I long for the sweet companionship, the—ah! who the deuce is that?"

"It is Leah," replied Mrs. Marvin as she rose, in blushing confusion, and tumbled the poodle on to the floor. "Come in, Miss Cohen"—making a desperate effort to appear unconcerned. "My friend, Mr. Warhurst, is here and waiting to hear you sing."

The girl to whom these words were directly addressed, and who had paused irresolutely on the threshold of the room, now came forward, and the manager gave a little start of surprise, for, naturally supposing that his amiable friend would be partial to her *protégée*, he had scarcely expected that the "stage-struck young lady," to use his own words, would be so extremely handsome as Mrs. Marvin had represented.

But the widow had not exaggerated the girl's good looks.

She was really beautiful.

Her eyes and her hair were her chief features. The hair was abundant, and of a jet black, silken hue. It was gracefully arranged into one massive coil, worn at the back of her well-poised head.

Her eyes were large, luminous, and dark, and showed a marvellous depth of passion, originality, and truly powerful strength of will and talent seldom seen in the eyes of one so young.

The girl's form bore out this part of her individuality. It was tall and well proportioned, but its curves and outlines tended more to the severe magnificence of a Minerva than the voluptuous grace of a Venus.

After some introductory remarks Miss Casella, at the manager's request, walked to the piano, and turning over a vast heap of loose music selected a song with which she was well acquainted, and soon her rich, impassioned voice filled the room with its sweet and powerful melody.

As the last prolonged strain died softly away Mr. Warhurst rose, and with a curiously thoughtful expression on his face looked at the girl, who was tremulously awaiting his verdict.

"You need not go home, Miss Casella," he said, "at least not to live. Your voice alone ought to secure you a comfortable income."

"Oh, do you mean it?" she answered, eagerly, while her dark eyes glowed with pleasure. "Do you really think I could sing in public, if I tried?"

"I think you possess a voice of unusual quality," he replied, gravely. "But whether you would have the courage to sing in public remains to be seen. At all events, I will do what I can for you, and if I cannot engage you myself I will use my influence to secure you an engagement. Come to me to-morrow, and I will try your allocation. But you must forgive me if I hurry away, now, I have an engagement, but I shall expect to see you both at the theatre to-night."

He drew out his pocket-book as he spoke, and taking a piece of paper from it, hastily wrote out a pass to admit two to the stalls, and then, accompanied by Mrs. Marvin, he left the room.

"Will she do?" asked the young widow, as she bade good-bye to him in the hall.

"Splendidly. If she shows any talent for acting I'll train her myself, and engage her for two years. Be sure you come with her to my place to-morrow. I am anxious to present my daughters to their prospective step-mamma," he added meaningly, as he endeavoured to steal a kiss from the soft, white cheek, looking so delicately fair

under the reflecting rose-coloured light of the hall lamp suspended by silver chains above the door.

But Mrs. Marvin evaded the caress, and when she had laughingly and unceremoniously pushed her ardent admirer through the open door she returned to the drawing-room, the blush still warm and deep upon her cheek, and her pale blue eyes sparkling with the radiant light of inward happiness.

"Well, my dear," she cried, gaily, "what do you think of him? Is he not a delightful man?"

The girl was gazing dreamily out of the window, and roused herself from her reverie as she replied,—

"Yes, Ellen, I think he looks very clever and kind. And, oh! I am so pleased he seemed satisfied with my voice."

"So am I, and I must congratulate you, Leah, upon having acquitted yourself so well before such a competent judge. But are you really still bent upon this step—earning your own livelihood in this way? Do you think you will never grow homesick, nor wish to return to your home in Yorkshire?"

"Never. To live in the same house with my step-father, to listen again to those long, prosy lectures which he continually thinks it his duty to inflict on me! Besides, I must have money. My mother's income is only small. I could not stay at home to be a burden to her; so when she married I resolved to strike out a new line of life for myself, to earn money by either teaching or singing. I feel that this is the only profession open to me, and the only one I care to adopt."

"Not teaching, Leah. After what Mr. Warhurst said I feel sure you will never find it necessary to have to teach the rudiments of music to young and stupid beginners. A more brilliant career is before you. A good introduction, a little professional help, on your own part diligence and health, and you will soon stand alone while the plaudits of a delighted and appreciative audience fall fast and thick around you."

"Oh, Mrs. Marvin, how good of you to give me such sweet encouragement! How can I thank you for all your kindness to me?"

"Allow me to bask in the light of your smiles when you are a star," she retorted in her easy, fluent way. "Give me the tribute of your friendship when I become only one of your numerous and adoring circle of admirers. And now, dear, linking her arm in that of her young friend's, "to return from the ethereal to the material—from Hope's flattering tale to stern reality. Let us go into the dining-room, and ring for tea."

## CHAPTER II.

CONSIDERABLY over a year had elapsed since Leah Casella had wearied of the dreary monotony of her country home, and left her step-father's abode to seek fame and fortune in London.

With the sanguine simplicity of the uninitiated she had fondly imagined that it would be so easy in that vast emporium to turn her talents to account; but notwithstanding her friend's kindness and helpful encouragement, she eventually found that she would have many obstacles to surmount before she could even earn enough money to supply her necessary requirements and attain the success she had so long desired.

Had she not been fortunate enough to possess a friend in Ellen Marvin, who was intimately acquainted with many musical people, and herself a great favourite in the theatrical world, she would undoubtedly have had a very poor chance of becoming known.

But owing to his admiration of the pretty widow Mr. Warhurst did his utmost to help on the young actress. And as he had from the first expected, his efforts on her behalf were not exercised in vain.

Leah was an apt pupil, and her acting was intensely real, her clear, sweet voice passionate and appealing.

She lived for the ovations, for her profession

alone, and actuated by enthusiasm, she threw her whole heart and soul into her work with all the fervid intensity of all her strong, emotional nature.

During the first year of her professional career she heard only once from home—a tender, pathetic appeal from her weak, loving little mother, and a long, carefully written epistle from her step-father, in which he assured her that he prayed daily that she might see the folly and error of the wicked profession she had adopted, which, in his opinion, was the first certain step to perdition.

Leah answered only her mother's letter, and wrote as dutifully and affectionately as any truant daughter might have written.

But she did not return home.

She retained her engagement, and continued to live in the same house with Mrs. Marvin, until that lady had changed her residence with her name, and became the wife of her employer, Mr. Warhurst, an event which Leah and his two daughters had for some time foreseen.

It was the end of the season, and the theatre being closed, Mr. Warhurst had departed to the Continent with his newly-made bride, so combining his usual summer trip with that very delightful excursion, the honeymoon, thus leaving his two daughters, Ethel and Jessie, free from parental restraints, and at liberty to follow their own sweet will.

Apparently they intend to make the most of the time at their disposal, for Jessie has already planned a visit into the country, and her sister is looking forward to more than one happy meeting with her cousin, Percy Clements, for whom she has conceived a deep unchangeable attachment, much to her father's displeasure and disappointment, for Percy is poor, and Mr. Warhurst deems Ethel fair and lovely enough to secure for her husband, if not a titled man, at least one rich enough to give his daughter every luxury and a high position in the social scale.

"How do I look, Jessie? Am I positively as beautiful as I can be made?"

They were alone, Ethel and her sister, and, as she spoke, the elder girl was standing before a mirror giving a few finishing touches to her toilet and fastening an exquisite white rose into the silken folds of her pale blue blouse with a diamond star brooch.

It was a bright, smiling, oval-shaped face that the looking-glass reflected. Her features were not perhaps quite so well formed as Leah Casella's, but in her own particular style she was almost as beautiful.

She was a blonde with eyes a clear blue, shadowed with sweeping eyelashes and straight well-defined brows.

A mischievous smile that spoke of a keen sense of humour and wit played round her perfect lips.

Her bright golden hair fell becomingly in abundant twists and coils about her fair white temples and behind the exquisitely chiselled ears.

"You look simply irresistible," returned her appreciative younger sister with an approving glance. "I am quite jealous. You cut me out entirely. But suppose Percy does not come after all! What a disappointment it will be—to you, of course, I mean—not to me!"

"He is certain to come. He never breaks his promises. I wish you would go down to the kitchen, Jessie, and see that Sarah has everything nice for tea."

Then, when her obliging sister had obeyed this request, Ethel sat down in a low easy chair, which she drew into the recess of the window, and soon fell into a deep reverie.

She is thinking of Percy, her secretly adored cousin.

How pleased she would be to see him—her own Percy. How would he look! What would he say?

Ah, if only her father would be kind and invite him sometimes to the house, how happy she would be!

But at any rate she would see him again. At any moment he might be there, standing by her side; and she could picture his clear, smiling eyes looking into hers—could feel the touch of





his strong sinewy fingers on hers as she knew he would hold her hand at meeting.

Oh, happy dream! soon to be exchanged for a still more blissful reality.

When Jessie returned to the room she was smiling amicably, and the tall figure that came close upon her heels was none other than Percy Clements.

A young man of about five and twenty, well but slimly built, with fair hair, handsome features, and eyes that looked pleasantly into yours, and seemed to sparkle with mirth and good temper.

"Oh, Percy, so you have come at last!" cried Ethel, rising from her chair, her face irradiated with joy. "Were you not surprised to hear that papa was married?"

"I was, indeed; and if I had only known that you and Jessie were alone I would have been here to see you ere this. But, as I told you in my letter, I have been out of town, and only received your last note a few days ago."

He had drawn her behind the partially closed curtains, and for a few moments they stood together looking out into the deepening twilight, while Jessie discreetly turned her back upon them and apparently busied herself with rearranging the pleasant tea-table.

"It's our turn next, little coz," Percy is saying as he draws Ethel's arm within his own. "When am I to ask your father?"

But she artfully appears to misunderstand him.

"What is it you wish to ask him, Percy?" she says, as she demurely turns aside her head.

"You have no idea?"

"Not the slightest."

"And what do you suppose I came here for?"

"To see Jessie."

She glances up at him, laughing, but something in the expression of his eyes causes her to lower her own in sudden confusion, and a swift blush rises to her face.

"Now, Ethel, don't be a little tease. You know quite well that I have nothing more than a cousinly regard for Jessie. It is of you I wish to speak to your father."

"Of me!" echoes the girl, feigning surprise.

"Yes, of you, dear," he gently replies, drawing her nearer to him with a tender gesture.

Was it that his clasp tightened? Was it something in his very touch that sent the message from his heart to hers?

Ethel knew as if by intuition that Percy loved her, and was about to ask her to be his.

"You know I am not a rich man," went on Percy, in his low, subdued tones; "but I am next on the list for a very good appointment abroad, and if I get it, will you promise to be my wife, Ethel? I have loved you so long, dear, ever since I met you down at Westmoor—at my aunt's house; but I dared not tell you because I was not in a position to marry. It is scarcely fair to ask you to wait for me, but I love you so, I cannot give up the hope of one day calling you mine, and I think you do care for me too—a little—don't you, darling?"

"More than a little," she replied, as she nestled closer to him. "I love you with my whole heart, Percy."

"What are you two talking about all this time?" cried a merry voice, as the window curtains were unceremoniously dragged aside, and Jessie's laughing face peered through at the two discomfited lovers. "Do you know that I am waiting tea, and of course I can't commence without—"

"What?" inquired Percy.

"Two spoons."

"All right, then, here we are," laughingly responded her cousin. "So you really feel very curious to know what we were talking about, Jessie?" he said as he placed her a chair next to his own, for Ethel had taken her seat at the head of the table, and with downcast eyes that shadowed shining worlds of joy was blushing pouring out the tea.

"Yes, of course I do. I know you would not be talking about the weather."

"No—" quickly inventing a reply. "We were discussing a more interesting subject—the colour and texture of a bridesmaid's dress."

Innocent Jessie opened wide her eyes in undisguised astonishment.

"For me or Ethel?"

"For you when Ethel is married!"

"Is she going to be married? I didn't know. She is not even engaged."

"Yes, she is—to me," coolly returned Percy, as with apparent unconcern he helped himself to a slice of bread-and-butter.

"To you! What an idea!" Jessie spoke, with girlish candour. "Papa will never consent. He can't do without Ethel at the theatre. Besides, he thinks she ought to marry a lord or a duke if anybody at all. But you can have me if you like," she added graciously. "I am not of so much use to him as Ethel."

"Thanks very much for the offer"—with a mischievous gleam in his laughing blue eyes. "But as I have just asked your sister to marry me I am afraid I shall be compelled to decline your kind proposal. You know, she might sue me for breach of promise."

"Jessie is quite right, though," interposed Ethel, who, until now, had been too overwhelmed with confusion to join in the conversation. "Papa will be very angry when he knows. Perhaps I did wrong, Percy, to ask you here in his absence. You won't tell him, Jessie, what we have just told you, till—"

"Till I've bought Ethel an engagement ring, then I don't care if all the world knows," interrupted her audacious lover.

It was at this interesting point of the conversation that the happy trio were suddenly startled by a knock at the door, and in answer to Jessie's loud "Come in" a woman of an uncommonly unprepossessing appearance entered the room.

She was of medium height, and walked with a stooping, slouching gait. Her complexion was an unhealthy red; her features coarse and dominated by an expression of cunning.

She had a heavy, sullen upper lip, and there was a furtive sidelong glance in her bleared eyes as of suspicion or dread of it.

For many years she had been in Mr. Warhurst's employment as housekeeper and cook, and although he had more than a faint suspicion that she was secretly a slave to the "Demon in Solution," on account of her excellent cooking, her long service in the family, and one or two other good qualities, he hesitated to give the woman her dismissal.

"A letter—from papa!" exclaimed Ethel, as she took a sealed envelope from the servant's hand and quickly ran her eye over its contents. "He is coming home to-day! They have returned to England. He may arrive at any moment. Oh, Percy, what will he say if he finds you here?"

"I know what I shall say. I shall wish him and his wife every happiness, though I'm kicked out of the house in return for my congratulations."

"Which you thoroughly deserve to be," said a well known voice behind them, and the three simultaneously looking in the same direction beheld Mr. Warhurst standing in the dim light of the threshold, with his smiling, elegantly dressed bride leaning affectionately on his arm.

"Well, Percy, what are you doing here?" said the manager, with difficulty repressing a frown of disapproval. "I scarcely expected to find my daughters entertaining young men on my return."

"There's only one young man here, uncle," returned Percy, with ludicrous gravity, "and that is my unfortunate self—unfortunate to have incurred your displeasure, but fortunate to be the natural guardian in your absence of these two unprotected damsels."

"Tut, tut, don't talk as if you were on the stage, boy," was the petulant remark. And then, with an effort to hide his ill-humour, he turned to his wife and said, "My dear, allow me to introduce you to my nephews. I don't know if you have had the honour of meeting him before!" with a sarcastic emphasis on the word "honour."

"No, I have not had that pleasure," she replied, extending her neatly gloved hand with a gracious smile, "but I have heard Ethel speak of you, Mr. Clements. Are you staying long in town?"

"I am living altogether here, at present, but soon I hope," with an expressive glance at his cousin Ethel, "I shall leave England, and go abroad for good."

"What are you two girls thinking of?" interrupted the manager, at this point. "Haven't you a word of welcome to say to your new mother?"

"No need of words." It was the voluble Jessie who replied. "Mrs. Warhurst—mamma, I mean—knows that she is welcome, and that we love her almost as much as you do, papa."

"It's very sweet of you to say that, dear," affectionately kissing her step-daughter. "I know it won't be my fault if we are not all happy together. And now show me to my room, for I am dead tired, and I want to get these wraps off."

And with her arm linked through Jessie's, and with a bright little nod of farewell to Percy, Mrs. Warhurst went out, leaving her husband alone with the lovers. But he, too, soon left the room, to divest himself of his travelling coat, and Percy then took the opportunity to whisper to Ethel,—

"Good-bye, darling. I think I had better go now, for uncle does not seem over pleased to see me. But you will write to me very soon, won't you, dear, and tell me where I can meet you?"

"Will you not come here again?"

"No, not until I am in a position to ask your father's consent to our marriage. Till then—you will be true to me, Ethel!" he whispered, pressing her hand in farewell.

"Always, Percy," was the low, fervent reply.

"Nothing, no one can change me. I shall always be the same to you."

What a bitter parting that was! The more terrible to Percy, because he knew how many obstacles he must surmount before he could hope to call Ethel his own; but at last he had to tear himself away, and as the girl watched his tall, graceful figure swinging out of sight she felt that till they could meet again the world would seem a waste, and time a blank.

## CHAPTER III.

"LEAH, I've such glorious news to tell you," exclaimed Jessie Warhurst, running with unceremonious haste into Miss Casella's bedroom. For when her friend Ellen Marvin married the manager, Leah had also gone to live at 3, Hawthorn-place. "We have had an invitation to spend a fortnight in the country, and papa says we may go, and I am so delighted, aren't you?"

"Glad! Why should I be glad!" raising her dark eyes in grave surprise to the girl's bright, animated countenance.

"Because you are going, of course. The letter is from one of my aunts, and she asks you to accompany me if Ethel cannot accept the invitation."

"And Ethel is not going?"

"No, papa says he can't spare her at present. But that's all nonsense. The truth is, he is afraid she will meet Percy there."

"Poor Ethel! She must be terribly disappointed."

"She is, but perhaps mamma will persuade him to allow her to join us later on. You will go, won't you, dear Miss Casella?" pleaded Jessie, noticing the somewhat dubious expression on Leah's face.

"I don't know. I won't promise. Why should your aunts invite me. I am not acquainted with either of them. Surely there is some mistake!"

"Mistake! No, no. Here is the letter, read it, then you can see that you are really invited."

With evident indifference Miss Casella laid down the brush with which she had been smoothing her long raven hair, and took the open letter from Jessie's hand; but as she carelessly glanced over the neat and carefully written pages a strange expression, half annoyance, half amusement, stole into her averted eyes.

The letter read as follows:—

"MY DEAR NIECE,—

"I hope you won't think me forgetful of you in not writing sooner; but I have been waiting until I could fix a time for you and Ethel to pay us a visit to Crossbar Lodge.

"We shall be very pleased to see you both on Saturday next. If Ethel cannot leave home at present you may bring instead that young person of whom you spoke in your last letter—that is, if you feel sure she will not take a delight in teasing my pets, and in turning my house upside down.

"Jessica you know is not very strong, and could not bear any excitement or strain upon her nerves, so don't bring your friend unless she is a well behaved and decorous young lady.

"My Fido ('that's her dog,' parenthetically remarked Jessie) has not been looking well lately. I am afraid he has the mange.

"Don't forget to write and tell me by which train you will arrive, then I will send the carriage to meet you at the station.

"Affectionately yours,

"CAROLINE THISTLEBY."

"Your aunt seems to have formed a very bad opinion of me," said Leah, laying down the letter with a little forced laugh. "But perhaps she is right, and as I am not a very 'well behaved and decorous young lady' I think I shall stay at home, and not upset her equanimity. At all events, I have no great desire to spend a whole fortnight in a dreary country house with two severe old maids—to sit bolt upright all day long, afraid to move lest I tumbled the upholstery covers, or accidentally stepped upon a favourite poodle's toes. No thank you, Jessie, I am afraid you will have to refuse this very kind invitation for me, and travel northwards alone."

"That papa will never consent to," dolefully returned the disappointed girl. "If you won't go with me I shall have to give up the idea altogether. But I do feel sorry—it's so delightful in the country just now at this time of the year; and the theatres will be opening soon; then we shan't have another chance till next summer. You can't imagine how disappointed I am."

Leah looked at her in surprise.

"Do you really care so much about it, Jessie? Are you sure there is no other attraction for you there besides the rural delight and beautiful scenery? Is it a very pretty place where these amiable aunts of yours reside?"

"Charming. They live at Crossbar Lodge, two miles from the quaint little town of Westmoor. Dear me, Leah, what have I said!—what is the matter?" for the colour had swiftly suffused her listener's usually pale countenance, and she was staring at Jessie with a look of unutterable astonishment in her great dark eyes. "Do you know Westmoor!—Do you know anyone there?"

"Know it!"—The answer was given with a half suppressed sigh. "I ought to know it well! It is my native place, and my mother is living there."

"Ah, yes, I forgot that your home is in Yorkshire. But I did not know that your people lived at Westmoor! What a strange coincidence! Won't you change your mind now and go with me just to have a peep at the old place?"

For a moment Leah did not answer.

She sat looking at herself in the glass, a long steady look.

Supposing she did go to Westmoor—would the people there know her again? would she be able to see her mother without her step-father's knowledge?

She felt that she could not submit to enter his house again. He had come between them. He had influenced her mother against her. Even her last letters home remained still unanswered.

She never spoke of these things or of her mother to her friends. Yet she had not forgotten the past. She had not ceased to love the only creature in the world for whom she had ever felt the strong emotions of her passionate nature stirred.

In the early morning, when the silvery dawn

was lifting the heavy clouds of night, she would often lie awake thinking of that one true friend—picturing in her mind's eye her sweet smiling face—remembering all her kindnesses—all the sacrifices she had made for her—the only child she had so dearly loved.

And at such moments the tears would roll down Leah's cheeks, and she would reproach herself for having left home—for not having made a stronger effort to propitiate her step-father—to bear more patiently with his peculiarities, his eccentricities and sanctimonious lectures.

And now the sound of that name so long unheard struck her with a sense of passionate pain and regret.

Why had she not tried to see her mother sooner?

She might be ill—too ill even to write to her—her truant, thoughtless daughter!

But at last the opportunity had come.

She would take it. She would end this suspense. She would see her mother again—see if she were well and happy, and be clasped in her dear maternal arms once more!

"Yes, Jessie, I will go with you," she said raising her head with sudden resolution. "But you must promise me not to tell your aunts who I am. I will take another name and try to disguise myself in some way. I don't want my step-father to know that I am staying near Westmoor."

"I will promise anything if only you will go," was the delighted reply. "And I will help you in every way I can to arrange a meeting with your mother."

So it was settled. The invitation was graciously accepted, and when the morning fixed for their departure arrived Leah appeared at the breakfast table wearing a thick gauze veil, a small grey bonnet simply trimmed with a bow of black velvet and two white wings, and a severely plain tweed costume—a style of dress which greatly altered her usual appearance and natural grace of figure.

The manager and his wife were late risers, and did not see the two girls off, but Ethel accompanied them to the station and waved her last adieu with just a suspicion of a tear in her sapphire eyes, evidently finding but small consolation in Jessie's sanguine assertion that "papa would be certain to let her come later on."

With a little sigh she turned disconsolately homeward while the train flew swiftly through the sultry air, quickly leaving behind the ceaseless din of city life, and conveying the young actress and her friend to green fields and shady lanes, level and lawn-like pastures, where the sunshine slept on swards of velvet that glowed in the verdant garb of summer, where the sun wooed each flower, and the songs of happy woodland birds answered to the soft whispering of trees, where the dreamy, soothing sound of the swiftly flowing streams, and the friendly shelter of the dark green willows there seemed to invite the weary traveller to repose.

As Leah thought of all these things, pictured to herself the peaceful seclusion, the towering hills, the beautiful moorland scenery of her native place, she fell to dreaming of her past girlhood days—of her dear, gentle, loving little mother—of the quiet happy home which they had shared together in that tranquil time gone by, before her own father had died, leaving them both friendless and almost fortuneless alone in the world.

How long ago it seemed! How much older she felt! And yet it was only one year since she left home, little more than two since her mother had cast aside her widow's weeds and secured a home, if not for her daughter for herself, as Mr. Langton's wife.

"Of what are you thinking so deeply?" suddenly asked her companion at length, interrupting these retrospective meditations. "You have been so still and quiet all the way. I thought you were asleep."

They were drawing near Westmoor now, and as Jessie spoke Leah involuntarily seemed to straighten herself, and drew her veil more closely

over her face, as if in anticipation of recognition from the railway officials.

But to her great relief the porter who opened their carriage door and, with a view to a prospective fee, attentively inquired the extent of their luggage, appeared to be a perfect stranger to her; and although the station was full of tender memories to Leah, not one familiar figure met the quick scrutinising gaze she cast around her as they alighted upon the platform.

She stood for a moment alone, her mind full of strange, conflicting thoughts, while she watched the train that had brought them steam slowly away across the level lands until the haze of distance hid it from view. Then, when Jessie returned to her side with the intimation that her aunt's carriage was there waiting for them, she followed her almost mechanically from the station and into the neat little phaeton standing on the bridge with a pair of smart chestnut ponies, and an elderly, sedate looking groom holding their heads.

The man then seated himself beside Jessie, and taking the reins in his hand, touched the ponies lightly with the whip, and soon they were leaving behind them the long, white limestone road, the beautiful, extensive scenery, studded with hamlets and isolated homesteads, and approaching by a neatly bordered drive the entrance to Crossbar Lodge—a low, rambling, old-fashioned building, with deep-set windows, and jutting corners covered with a variety of parasitical plants and a profusion of red and white flowers still in full bloom.

No one was visible waiting for them, so Jessie alighted from the carriage and timidly pulled the door bell, whereupon there immediately issued from within the sound of furious barking, and upon the door being opened by a modest, rim-looking maid-servant, two or three extraordinary specimens of the canine species rushed out and bounded towards them, seizing upon the travellers' lower garments evidently with the most hostile intentions.

"Come in, Mite! Be quiet, Fido! How dare you leave your bed! Go back to your bed, Fido," cried a loud shrill voice, close at hand, and the next moment a tall, angular woman attired in a rustling black silk and an imposing cap came forward and greeted the two girls with a patronizing smile.

"So this is Miss Collins!" said Miss Thistleby, addressing her by the name she had assumed, and bending a scrutinizing eye upon the embarrassed girl. "Pardon me, have I not met you before?"

"I think not," in a low voice, and with an effort retaining her composure.

"Probably I have seen someone who resembles you. In my public life," Miss Thistleby was a member of several local societies, "I meet so many people, and very often mistake one for another. And now, Eliza, show these two young ladies to the room they are to occupy, and when you come down bring Mite in and give him a bath. Really I'm quite ashamed of you—you naughty, dirty little doggie," she said, as with juvenile playfulness she called the poodle to her, and taking it in her arms, nestled her brown, withered cheek against its white, curly coat.

Thankful to escape, Leah hastened to follow Jessie and the maid up the white, enamelled staircase into a large, handsomely furnished bedroom, the walls of which were panelled with oak, and the doors, windows, and bed curtained with gold embroidered, rose-coloured velvet.

After the long journey, the heat and turmoil of crowded London, this cool fragrant room seemed to bring rest and peace to the two tired girls.

Outside were the sweet scented gardens, superb in their rich green colouring and gorgeous shades. The drowsy hum of insects came through the open window, and could be faintly heard in the stillness of the summer air, while now and then a sweet twittering note broke from the throat of some feathered songster, perched on a neighbouring branch.

"What a dear old place!" cried Leah, as she flung aside her bonnet and gloves, and sank with a little sigh of relief into a low cushioned chair near the open window. "Ah, Jessie, if only you



and I were alone in this house together I should enjoy the change immensely. But I must confess I feel rather afraid of Miss Thistleby. Is your Aunt Jessica quite as formidable?"

"No, she is delicate, and a complete contrast to her sister. I am afraid you will find them both rather an infliction, Leah; but you know you did not come to Westmoor solely on their account, but to see your mother. After you have been here a day or two we will try and devise some way of meeting her. And now, are you ready? Let us go down, for you know we must not risk creating a bad first impression by keeping the dear old ladies waiting tea."

#### CHAPTER IV.

NEXT day was Sunday, Leah, whose mind was in a somewhat unsettled state at the thought of being so near her old home, awoke early, and feeling that she could not rest longer she started from her bed and went downstairs as soon as she heard the inmates of the house stirring.

Neither Miss Thistleby nor Jessie were in the breakfast-room, so she sauntered out into the fair, sunny garden in front of the house, and wandered down the well-kept paths till she found herself in a large orchard on a sloping grass bank partly surrounded by garden walls and beautifully clipped yew and box hedges.

How Leah did enjoy the dewy freshness of the morning air, the sweet scent of flowers, the thrilling songs of happy birds sitting from branch to branch!

Luscious fruit hung in tempting clusters upon the trees; the hot August sunshine streamed full upon her uncovered head. She wandered on and on till she found a seat under a wide-spreading cypress of enormous size; and here Jessie found her, eating an immense pear which had dropped from one of the fruit trees planted along the western side of the garden wall.

"So you are there, truant!" she exclaimed, her bright brown eyes looking laughingly at Leah from under her shady Leghorn hat. "I've been hunting everywhere for you; Aunt Caroline will be angry."

"What! for taking her fruit without even saying—By your leave!" smiled Leah. "Finding is keeping, you know, Jessie, and I picked this pear from out of the long grass."

"Nonsense; of course I don't mean that. But you ought not to have come out here in those thin slippers; Aunt is certain to scold you for getting your feet wet in the morning dew."

Breakfast was waiting when the two girls returned to the house.

Jessie, the younger Miss Thistleby, a delicate, eccentric spinster of forty-five, was sitting bolt upright in a chair at the lower end of the table with an unbecoming fawn-coloured shawl closely fastened round her shoulders.

She was rather deaf, and in answer to Leah's good morning, she simply shook her head, and with a short gasping cough and a beseeching glance at the empty fire-place murmured,—

"It's cold—so cold!"

"Cold! you are always cold!" exclaimed Miss Thistleby, with a contemptuous glance at her shivering sister. "If you were to rouse yourself, Jessie, and try to take an interest in the affairs of the nation, you would have something else to think about than fancying yourself ill. It is and to see a woman of your age and intelligence falling into such a state of apathy. And as for being cold in August it's simply ridiculous. Of course it's all imagination. Who could be cold a beautiful bright summer morning like this! Why don't you make a study of politics, as I do, or the emancipation of your own sex, then you could at least enlighten and instruct the ignorant."

"Ignorant! I know I'm not clever like you, Caroline."

"I never said you were," elevating her voice to a most irritating pitch. "Dear me, Jessie, I think you grow more deaf every day. It's simply wasting one's breath to talk to you." Then turning to Miss Casella, she remarked, pathetically, "poor creature! she has no soul for anything."

It was at this moment that Jessie, making a false step backwards as she was about to take her seat at the table, stepped upon the edge of Eldo's bed-basket, and with a yelp and a howl the dog toppled over on to the floor.

Miss Thistleby gave her niece a withering glance, then taking the dog in her arms she caressed and petted it as though Jessie had half killed that unfortunate quadruped.

"Poor dear! he is actually trembling; such a little upsets him!"

Alas! Jessie knew that to her cost.

"Are you going to church, Miss Thistleby?" asked Leah, with a laudable desire to preserve the domestic harmony.

"I go every Sunday," replied that estimable lady with an upward glance of her cold, unsympathetic eyes. "Of course, you and Jessie will accompany me. I have ordered the carriage."

But Leah begged to be excused.

She really feared to venture to church, lest she should be recognized by some of her old friends.

"I am afraid you will think me a perfect heathen," she said; "but I scarcely ever attend morning service, and I have a slight headache to-day; will you excuse me?"

"Certainly," with studied politeness; "my guests are always at liberty to follow their own inclinations."

"Then, auntie, will you allow Miss Collins to drive with us as far as Westmoor? She would like to have a walk and a look round the town."

"You know you may, perhaps, see your mother," suggested Jessie, after her aunt had given her reluctant consent to this arrangement, and retired to dress for church. "Your step-father is almost certain to be at chapel, and you may find your mother at home and alone."

"So I may. How good of you to think of it, Jessie! Oh! I do hope that I shall not be disappointed!"

And now Leah's eyes were shining with the feverish light of hopeful expectancy as she hurried through the quiet little town of Westmoor, after leaving Jessie and her aunt at the church gates. Her footsteps echo strangely in the silence of the Sabbath morn.

She glances neither to the right nor to the left till she sees before her a low, white building—her old home—standing in its own grounds and almost covered with clinging ivy and various kinds of clematis.

There is a little iron gate terminating a narrow grassy footpath leading to the back of the dwelling, where a small plot of ground had been planted with vegetables and turned into a home kitchen garden.

How little changed is everything!—how familiar every object is to Leah!

There are apparently the same green ferns and brilliant flowering plants in yellow pots within the windows, where white muslin curtains hang in all the glory of their pristine whiteness, the smooth sloping lawn, the rustic little summer-house with its latticed work of interlaced boughs and artistically-painted, pointed roof, and then—and now a mist comes before Leah's eyes. She holds her hand to her side to still the beating of her heart.

For there in the shadow of that sheltered retreat she has seen her mother seated, in her plain black gown and snow-white cap, her spectacles and an open book lying by her side.

A moment more and the impetuous girl is kneeling at her parent's feet, caressing the thin, withered hands and covering them with tears and passionate kisses.

"My darling, it is really you, or am I dreaming!" cried Mrs. Langton, as she strained her daughter to her breast. "Have you really come home to me at last, Leah?"

"Not to stay, only just to see you, mother. Is Mr. Langton," she never called him father, "still very angry with me?"

"I am afraid so. You know he does not like the thought of you living with those play-actors." Mrs. Langton had also an old-fashioned rural prejudice to members of Leah's profession. "He would not object to you living at home and making a little money by teaching music. Don't you think you could dear?"

But Leah shook her head.

"I should never have the patience for such drudgery," she answered. "I am doing very well at the theatre, and when you hear your daughter spoken of as a prima donna—when I have won a name, a fortune, and become the famed, the favourite singer of the fashionable musical world, then, mother, I think you will be proud of your wayward Leah!"

Mrs. Langton smiled fondly at her daughter's enthusiasm.

"You always were a romantic child, Leah, just like your father—so excitable and high-spirited. But I feel sure you will do right wherever you are. I have every confidence in you, Leah, and nothing can change my love for you."

"And yet," she was reminded gently, "you scarcely ever write to me. I have not had a letter from you for nearly six months. I was growing quite anxious, and thought you must be ill."

"So I have been—very ill indeed. I had a paralytic stroke in the spring, and quite lost the use of my right hand. So you see, dear, I could not write."

Ill! and she never to know it!

The girl glanced anxiously at her mother's face.

She saw a great change there.

The cheeks were pale and sunken, and there was a strangely aged look in the deeply-furrowed brow.

"Oh, mother," she cried, regretfully, "if only I could be nearer to you!—if only I could stay with you now! But tell me when may I come again? When will Mr. Langton be away?"

"Wednesday, I think. He is going to York. Come early in the afternoon, and we will have a long, happy day together."

Leah made the desired promise, and then, after kissing her mother affectionately, she hurried away, only giving one backward loving glance as she opened the wicket gate and waved her hand in token of farewell.

How little she thought that this would be the last time she would see her mother alive!

The carriage overtook her ere she had walked half the distance to Crossbar Lodge.

She took her seat opposite to Miss Thistleby and was unusually silent and thoughtful during the drive homeward.

After luncheon Jessie and she, left to their own resources, wandered again into the sunny garden, and through the shady orchard.

Seated on the low iron chair under the wide-spreading cypress-tree, they each told to the other their individual experiences of that eventful morning.

"After all I think it has been a very lucky day for both of us," said Jessie. "Who do you think spoke to me in coming out of church?"

Leah assured her that she had not the slightest idea.

"Then I will tell you if you will promise not to try your fascinations upon him, Leah. It was the curate. Such a dear little man he is! Aunt Caroline, you know, has a penchant for clerical gentlemen, and used to ask him to supper often when Ethel and I were staying here last year. I believe she never thought that he came to see us, but simply to talk to her about parochial and church matters, etc., when all the time I knew—"

"That he came to see you? Ah, Jessie, I understand now why you were so anxious to visit Westmoor."

"Well, he was the attraction, certainly," admitted the girl, with a conscious blush and smile. "We never met any other young man here except, of course, Cousin Percy, and he and Ethel were inseparable. They only took me about with them as a blind, to play propriety and that sort of thing. It was here they first met and learnt to love each other, and Percy—"

"Talk of the angels," said a familiar voice immediately above them; "what do you mean, little Jess, telling tales out of school?"

There was a light hearty laugh, a crackling of breaking boughs, a downward leap, and the next moment Percy Clements stood before the two astonished girls.

"Percy! you here!" exclaimed Jessie in the greatest surprise. "Where in the world did you come from? Did you drop from the skies?"

"No, not exactly! only from that high wall. I stepped upon a bee hive at the other side, and I'm afraid I have made some acquaintances which will be rather difficult to shake off," he added, dashing down a big bumblebee which had been making persistent efforts to settle on his shirt-collar.

"Ethel is not here," Jessie hastened to explain; "Miss Collins came with me instead. Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Clements, Leah. A look of disappointment suddenly clouded Percy's fair smiling face as his cousin gave him this information.

But he took Leah's hand with grave courtesy, and as he bent his kind expressive eyes upon her hers drooped bashfully under his scrutinizing gaze, and a strange thrill ran through her frame, such as she had never experienced before.

They all three now turned in the direction of the house, and as they sauntered through the verdant avenue of trees up the garden path Mr. Clements told them that he was staying at an hotel in Westmoor, where he had arrived the previous day; and then gave them an amusing recital of his aunt's surprise and consternation subsequent to his arrival at Crossbar Lodge, ere he joined the two girls in the orchard.

They found the sisters sitting in state in the drawing-room waiting for the return of their nephew.

Miss Thistleby had been reading the life and history of one of her favourite authors. Evidently the work had had a depressing effect upon her, for as she laid the book down at their entrance she seemed to have some difficulty in calling up a smile to her masculine countenance, the features of which were much too large and coarse for feminine beauty.

Jessie had a bad fit of coughing as they entered, and Fido attacked the stranger with even more than his usual ferocity.

With his pleasant, genial manner, Percy, however, soon managed to disperse the chilling atmosphere, and with daring effrontery—so it seemed to the timorous Jessie, who stood somewhat in awe of her formidable aunt—he opened the piano, and entreated Miss Casella to favour them with a song.

Never before had Leah sung with such thrilling pathos. She had selected a love song, pure and simple, and as her marvellous voice lingered over the last verse ending in that truly pathetic strain

"Oh! little have I been beloved, sad, silent, and alone,  
And yet I feel in loving thee the wide world as my own.

Thine is the name I breathe to Heaven, thy voice is o'er my sleep.

I only ask that love like this may pray for thee, and weep.

I only ask that love like this may pray for thee, and weep."

Percy bent eagerly forward, as if fearing to lose a single note, and something very like tears glistened in his speaking eyes.

The song had touched some hidden chord in his heart.

"You have an exquisite voice. I never heard anyone sing like you, before," he said, with unmistakable sincerity. "Thank you, Miss Collins, you have given me a great treat."

How sweet were his words of praise to her!

Leah was not accustomed to flattery. She could at all times command appreciation; but never before had expressions of approbation fallen so welcome upon her ears.

She heard him with an indescribable sensation of pleasure.

And so the evening passed, and next day and the day following that, and Leah began to find herself listening for the well-known footsteps, the rich full-toned voice of Percy Clements.

She was happy only in his presence.

What had changed her so! What unaccounted hue had crept over her heart and life!

Love was now to her the only desirable thing in the universe—the only thing worth struggling for—triumphing for—dying for.

When Percy was near she feared to meet his

gaze, lest he would read in her eyes the new thoughts that had come to her—that had filled her mind with a delicious unrest.

For Leah Casella, for the first time in her life, had fallen desperately in love—had embarked, heedlessly and recklessly, on that fathomless sea of sentiment which was to her as it has been to many others, the beginning of all her misery and her remorse.

## CHAPTER V.

JESSIE, do you believe in dreams? I had such a terrible one last night."

"Then don't inflict it on me. I've a horror of dreams. Aunt Jessie dreams—such dreams! you never heard such wild flights of imagination. Then she asks me to interpret them for her. I hope that's not your intention, Leah!"

"Can you interpret dreams? Listen to mine then, Jessie, and let us try and make out if there is any truth or meaning in it."

Jessie threw herself into a chair with an air of resignation.

"If I must, I must. Go on Leah; but please cut it short."

"To begin, with then, I dreamt I was standing near that little gate that leads into the back garden of my old home. I thought I had gone there with the intention of trying to see my mother, but she was not in the summer-house and nowhere to be seen.

"I stood in the centre of the garden and loudly called her by her name; but only the voice of the wind answered me as it swept over the hedges and through the trees, rustling the leaves with a mournful sound as of one long, deep shuddering sigh.

"Again and again I called mother, mother, then listened attentively, but still all was silent as the grave.

"At last, with a strange feeling of awe that seemed to fill me with apprehension and depression, I returned to the summer-house, where you know I had last seen her; and with that inconsistency so characteristic of dreams I then saw that it was no longer empty.

"A long, dark oaken box extending from seat to seat by some mysterious means had suddenly appeared there, and with a morbid curiosity to know what this contained, I thought in my dream that I reached out my hand and slowly and carefully lifted the lid. That same instant I recoiled with a cry of horror and awe."

"Well, and what was in it?"

"My mother, with her face a marble whiteness, her eyes closed as if in death, her hands folded across her breast. She looked so still and motionless she might have been either dead or sleeping. Oh, I never had such a horrible dream. It was so terribly vivid. What could it mean?"

"Perhaps your mother is going to die soon?"

"Jessie! you really don't mean that!"

There was so much genuine distress in the girl's voice that her amused companion laughed outright.

"Of course not—I was only jesting."

"It is too serious a subject to jest upon," was the grave rejoinder.

"You forget that it was only a dream—that you saw your mother alive and well on Sunday—that you are going to have tea with her to-day. Come, Leah, don't be superstitious. I declare you are growing quite morbid. Let us go now and dress, for you know Percy promised to come to-day to take you to see the church and other places of note. Of course he does not know that you have been here before, so you must appear to take an interest in everything you see. After that you can leave us and keep your appointment with your mother. I will make some excuse for your absence."

An inviting prospect truly; but that curious dream had so intensely impressed and troubled Leah that it was with an effort she sustained her part in the bright happy conversation kept up by Jessie and her cousin as they all three walked to Westmoor through the fields and purple heather—through woods chequered with shade and sunlight, over the little footbridge across the pretty fast-flowing river, in which the fleecy clouds, the

blue tinted sky, and swelling moorland hills were most distinctly mirrored.

To add to the girl's unhappy frame of mind, Percy talked continuously of Jessie's sister.

When had she heard from her last? What had she said in her letter? Was there any chance of her joining them at Crossbar Lodge?

His mind seemed full of Miss Thistleby's absent niece. He could talk of no one else.

It was Ethel—always Ethel! Leah told herself bitterly.

At length they reached Westmoor, and entered the church through a massive and substantial gateway, which stood invitingly open.

The church itself was of castellated architecture, crowned with lofty towers and angular turrets.

Inside Sicilian marble formed the steps of the communion chancel, vestry, and entrance to the chancel.

The windows were gracefully designed with geometrical tracing and memorial with various subjects.

Percy examined the workmanship of everything with the eye of a connoisseur, as with subdued voices he and his companions wandered slowly through the solemn edifice.

Retracing their steps to the main entrance they were about to leave the church when they were suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by a funeral procession which, unknown to them, had entered the churchyard.

They could not leave the place without passing through the line of mourners, so Percy drew Jessie and Leah aside into a seat in a secluded part of the church.

"Let us wait here till the service is over," he whispered.

Leah glanced curiously at the group of sad and serious faces all turned in one direction, many of which were familiar to her, and listened mechanically while the clergyman repeated the burial service in his solemn, sonorous tones.

Presently she started visibly, for her eyes had encountered those of her step-father, who stood near the pulpit, and who was to all appearance one of the chief mourners.

Instantly the remembrance of her strange dream recurred to her, and with a fearful presentiment that was as sudden as it was mysterious, she whispered a request that Percy would learn the name of the deceased.

He looked at her in surprise, but with that courtesy that characterised his usual bearing towards women he immediately left his seat and addressed his inquiry to a tall, dark-looking gentleman who stood nearest to them.

Involuntarily Leah followed.

She heard the reply, and staggered as if struck by a blow.

The name given was her mother's.

"Mrs. Langton, of Elm Cottage."

The speaker glanced past Percy at the slight, grey-robed figure standing close behind them, and as he noticed the sudden paling of the full red lips, the marble whiteness of her handsome countenance, he put out his hand just in time to save the unhappy Leah from falling to the ground.

"She is fainting! She must have air," he said, as, assisted by Percy and Jessie, he half-carried, half-supported her outside to the church porch.

"Who is she?" he asked, looking at the dazed, partly unconscious girl with a keen, interested gaze.

"Mrs. Langton's daughter." It was the frightened Jessie who replied. "She did not know her mother was dead, or even ill. This must be a terrible blow to her."

"The best thing we can do is to get her home as soon as possible. Where is she staying? I am a doctor—Doctor Edalle—and will accompany you. My carriage is waiting at the gate."

And with professional promptitude the stranger soon had Leah seated in one of the closed vehicles in attendance outside the churchyard.

The poor girl crouched in a corner of the carriage, with her dark, dry eyes gazing out into vacancy. It was impossible to tell from her pale and motionless countenance if she were yet really conscious of what had occurred.



Arrived at Crossbar Lodge, the doctor drew Jessie aside and told her to take Miss Casella to her room, to give her a glass of wine, and try to console with her in her great sorrow.

In the meantime he would explain everything to the Miss Thistlebys, with whom, he said, he was slightly acquainted.

So Jessie put her arm round Leah with quiet authority, to which she passively yielded, and drew her upstairs to her room. Then she left her for a minute to follow the doctor's instructions, and when she returned with a glass and a decanter which she had herself brought from the dining-room there was nothing to be heard in the room but the low sobbing of the girl who had thrown herself on the bed in an abandonment of despair.

Jessie said nothing, but lifted one white hand which rested in striking contrast on the dark raven tresses, and pressed her lips to it in silent sympathy.

What could she say! How could words console a mourning daughter for the loss of one so near and dear to her, that best and truest friend—a loving mother!

A few days later Doctor Esdaille called again at Crossbar Lodge, presumably to see Miss Casella, but really with a hope of meeting that dark-eyed, bereaved young lady in whom he had felt so strangely interested.

She was alone with the younger Miss Thistleby when the doctor was announced—reclining on a brown brocaded velvet chair drawn into the recess of a low-bayed window, and was gazing out with despondent eyes at the brilliant landscape, the glistening rivulets, the distant woods and darker foliage of the garden's clustering shrubs.

She rose as he entered, and gave her hand to him with a sad, sweet smile.

"Are you better?" he said, in a low kind voice, paying but scant and certainly unprofessional attention to the coughing Jessica, and bending those wondrously expressive eyes of his upon the pale, sad-faced girl, who, he secretly thought, looked more lovely, more interesting than ever in her dark, clinging robes.

"Yes, thank you, I am quite well now," she answered gravely.

Then, after a little pause, she spoke again, and said quickly, as if impelled by a sudden impulse:

"Dr. Esdaille, did my mother mention me before she died?"

"She never spoke again after the paralytic stroke she had on Sunday night. But your step-father told me that she had said she had seen you just before she was taken ill. Naturally he thought that she was even then delirious."

"He might have let me know that she was ill."

"There was no time, even if he had known that you were staying so near. I was called in to see your mother on Sunday night; she died early on Monday morning. But Mr. Langton wrote to London. Did you not get the letter?"

"It was forwarded to me, and I did not receive it till Thursday. I suppose I ought not to blame my step-father; but it was through him that my mother and I have been so long parted."

"He is very penitent now, at any rate, and wishes you to go and see him before you leave Westmoor. He appears to have been deeply attached to his wife, and feels her loss greatly."

"If he loved my mother, and grieves for her I can forgive him everything—all his unkindness to me," she replied gently; "yes, I will call and see him before we return to town."

"And when will that be?" asked the doctor, feeling somehow that the idea gave him an indefinable sensation of pain and regret.

"On Wednesday first, if Miss Warhurst is ready to return with me. I want to get back to my work—away from here, where there are so many familiar sights to remind me of what I have lost," she added, with a little emotional break in her voice.

At that moment Miss Thistleby entered the room.

She frowned darkly at seeing Miss Casella standing talking in close proximity to the visitor, and expressed her disapproval by the frigid iciness of her tones.

For the doctor was a widower, and a great favourite with the fair sex. He was not, however, a very handsome man, but he had a good clever face, and an honest straightforward way with him which called forth respect and inspired confidence.

Miss Thistleby had shown very little sympathy for Leah in her trouble; for as she had remarked to her sister, Jessica, she had no patience with people who stooped to deception, who travelled about the country under assumed names, and obtained invitations to respectable houses under false pretences; but then—she parenthetically observed—were not actresses all the same—all dissemblers!

It was so easy for them to act what they were not—it was their profession to deceive!

Miss Casella was, however, happily unconscious of Miss Thistleby's altered opinion of herself. She had timidly apologised to her hostess for the part she had played; and during the sad days that followed her mother's interment she had been too deeply absorbed in the great sorrow that had fallen upon her with such cruel and unexpected suddenness to perceive that she was not quite forgiven, for endeavouring to hide from that punctilious lady her real identity.

## CHAPTER VI.

Two months had elapsed since Leah and Jessie had bade farewell to the Miss Thistlebys of Crossbar Lodge and returned to London to resume the daily routine of their usual occupations—Jessie to assist her step-mother in her social and domestic duties, and Leah to again take her part at the theatre and follow the profession in which her unflinching perseverance and natural talents had earned for her no mean reputation.

A November fog—so dense that foot-passengers and vehicles were alike in danger of collision—hung like a murky cloud over the whole city.

It could be felt even in the houses, and the early darkness shutting out the sun necessitated the gas being lighted shortly after noon.

Ethel and Leah had been attending a rehearsal, and were returning home together through the thick, fog-laden air.

They had almost lost their way in the labyrinth of streets, which were becoming almost as dim and trackless as a desert, when a familiar voice calling them to stop, arrested their attention, and simultaneously they both turned to find Percy Clements hurriedly trying to overtake them.

"I have had such a hunt for you two girls!" he exclaimed. "I accidentally saw you from the top of a bus, and then lost sight of you for a while. Aren't you afraid to be walking alone without a guide in this horrid gloom? You had better let me pilot you both home."

He greeted Miss Casella with his bright pleasant smile, and then drew Ethel's arm within his own with an air of proprietorship which did not escape Leah's watchful eye. She turned aside her head with a suppressed sigh, and a look of despair crept into her face.

This was not the first time that Percy had "accidentally" met them coming from the theatre—not the first time that Leah had seen Ethel's lovely face light up with pleasure and glow with a sudden blush at the sight of her cousin.

She knew that they loved each other, and as her own unrequited attachment for Percy Clements gradually deepened and grew into an all-absorbing passion this knowledge only added more fuel to her infatuation which had been enhanced and fanned into a flame by the breath of opposition.

But she must not let them guess her secret. She must not show her true feelings. She must hide her sorrow, her passionate jealous thoughts, locked up in her own unhappy breast.

So with an effort she joined in the conversation apparently naturally and easily, making some remark about the theatricals, and asking Percy what he thought of the piece in which she and Ethel had been taking part since its commencement.

"I am too deeply engrossed in listening to and watching you and Ethel to take much interest in the play." But Miss Casella—you must forgive me saying so—you have not acted nor looked quite so well lately as formerly. What is the matter? Have you been ill?"

"Leah has had a great sorrow, you know," interposed Ethel. "She lost her mother only two months ago."

"Ah, yes, I forgot!" He looked at her kindly, and Leah's eyes fell under his keen, sympathetic gaze. "It was a miserable time for you at Westmoor, and I felt for you deeply. That visit was not a very happy one for me either. You know I quite expected to find you there, Ethel. I believe you stayed away just to disappoint me."

"Indeed I did not," with one of her sweet shy glances. "It was not my fault—father would not let me go."

"Never mind, I shall have my revenge next week, shan't I, Ethel?" he said, with a meaning smile. Then, as he took her hand at parting, Leah heard him whisper, "to-morrow, darling," ere he turned and left them standing at the door of 3, Hawthorn-place, waiting for admittance.

That night Leah could not sleep. She had had many restless nights of late—many weary wakeful hours, in which Percy's face was always present to her.

She grieved bitterly for the death of her mother; and often in those silent lonesome hours, supposed to be devoted to rest and sleep, she would lie awake tossing from side to side in a tempest of anguish, her mind persistently dwelling upon the thought of her great loss, mingled with the bitter consciousness of her hopeless love for her friend's affianced lover.

And so the nights passed, and when the dawn broke—when one by one the stars paled and disappeared, and darkness slowly and reluctantly withdrew, Leah would rise from her bed with burning brow and aching limbs unrested, haggard and unrefreshed, starting at her own white face in the mirror, feeling that her beauty was leaving her, the lustre of her eyes fading, that life itself held for her no hope of future happiness or even contentment.

So absorbed was she in her present heart trouble that her former enthusiasm and love for her profession no longer existed, and she went through her work mechanically, listlessly, with a lack of energy and brilliancy that was becoming highly dissatisfactory to the observant manager.

At this time Mr. Warhurst's temper—never very amicable—seemed to assume an almost tyrannical tendency, and when, on the day following the meeting of Leah, Ethel and her cousin, the latter called to solicit a private interview with his uncle, that gentleman received him with an ominous frown, which was anything but encouraging to the naturally timorous lover.

"You say you have a favour to ask of me?" said Mr. Warhurst in his quick, imperative tones, when he and Percy were closeted together in the manager's own particular sanctum. "What is it? I suppose you are hard up, and have come to borrow money. How much do you want?" he asked, grimly drawing out his purse.

Percy's face flushed.

"Then for once, uncle, your surmises are at fault. It is not your money I want, it is —" The words died on his lips as he met that calm, scrutinising eye that seemed to penetrate his inmost thoughts. "I suppose you have heard that I have had an excellent appointment offered me abroad," he said, gradually leading up to the subject nearest to his heart.

"Yes, I heard something of the kind from my wife. Have you accepted it?"

"I have; and intend to leave England in less than a fortnight." The manager's stern face relaxed into something like complacency. "But," continued Percy with desperate boldness, "I am not going alone, I wish to take Ethel with me."

"What!"—now thrusting his purse back into his pocket and rising in astonished anger. "You wish to take my daughter with you! What nonsense is this that you are talking! What do you mean?"

"Only that I love Ethel, and—have come to-day to ask your consent to our marriage."

"Then you might have saved yourself the trouble; for never with my consent will Ethel marry you. She is a pretty girl—though I, her father, say it—and I intend her to make a more desirable match."

"Then you refuse?"

"Most emphatically I do; more than that, I shall exert what little parental authority I have over her to prevent her from committing such a foolish act."

"Oh, uncle! think what you are doing! not to speak of my own misery, Ethel loves me—it will break her heart to part her from me."

The manager smiled sardonically.

"Women's hearts are not so easily broken, and I'm sure my daughter has more sense than break hers over an absent admirer with a precarious appointment. I guarantee she forgets you in a month when she knows that you are really gone. Till then I must beg of you to abstain from coming here. I think you know that I have always objected to your visits."

"Don't be afraid," said Percy, now rising in intense anger. "It is scarcely probable that I shall subject myself twice to insult!"

He walked to the door, and without another word left the house, striding along the white frozen pavement with head erect and firm elastic step, a fixed set gaze in his unseeing eyes, his indignation straitening in his heart a half-formed resolution.

Meanwhile Ethel, attired in one of her prettiest gowns, sat with Leah in a small artistically furnished room which had been appropriated to Miss Casella when she first came to reside at Hawthorn-place; but as she became more as one of the family this apartment had been almost equally used by Mrs. Warhurst and her step-daughters.

But at the present moment Ethel's presence seems to irritate Leah.

She wants to be alone—alone with her own sad thoughts, for with jealous intuition she rightly surmises the purport of Percy's visit.

Will the manager consent? Will he allow Ethel to marry her cousin? Will Percy become irrevocably lost to her?

She could not bear to think that any other woman should call him husband—he who had never breathed one word of love to her, and yet who had unconsciously won her love—who was the only man who had ever roused a throb of passion in her breast.

For Leah loved Percy Clements as only a girl of her romantic temperament can love—madly, passionately, intensely, as many a woman does love when she knows that her love is hopeless!

Perhaps it was some subtle influence that kept them both so meditatively silent while they waited with equal anxiety to hear the result of Percy's interview with the manager.

Ethel stood by the window watching the twilight shadows deepening in the wintry sky,—a slight sylph-like figure, lithe and supple, with hair of shimmering gold and clear, sweet eyes, which now sparkled with suppressed excitement.

Something like a pang of jealousy shot through Leah's heart as she sat by the fire feigning to read, but glancing now and again at that silent, motionless form with a dim consciousness that Ethel was looking more lovingly than ever in her plain clinging gown of myrtle velvet.

At last came the sound of welcome footsteps in the outer corridor.

Ethel turned pale and trembled as the door opened and her father entered the room.

"Where is Percy?" she asked, in a breathless sort of way, starting forward with eager expectancy.

"How should I know?" returned the manager with simulated indifference. "He has gone. He left here half-an-hour ago."

"Gone!"

Ethel looked at her father aghast, her eyes suddenly dimmed with tears.

"Oh, papa, you have not been unkind to him, you have not sent him away in anger!"

"I've done him a good turn, for which he will thank me some day, and you, too, Ethel. I don't know what has come over you two girls lately.

There's Miss Casella does nothing but mope, and goes through her parts as if she were half asleep, and here are you ready to melt into tears because I refuse to allow you to throw yourself away on a worthless fellow who has not a ten-pound note to call his own. Let me hear no more of such folly. If I see your cousin here again I'll send you off on tour, and make it impossible for you and him to meet again."

And so saying the irate manager strode angrily from the room, slamming to the door behind him.

Ethel covered her eyes with her hand, and sank into a chair with a little heartbroken sob.

"He has sent him away, and I shall never see him again!" she moaned. "My Percy! My own darling! Oh, Leah, what shall I do!"

Leah was only human. She could not pity her. Deep down in her heart she was even conscious of something like relief and pleasure at the thought of her rival's disappointment.

"You must try to forget him, as your father wishes," she said, turning her tell-tale eyes away from the other's troubled gaze.

"Forget him, never!" with tearful vehemence. "He is too dear to me. I shall never change. You don't know what love is, or you would understand what this parting means to me."

And angry at not receiving the pity for which she yearned Ethel rose and left the room to pour her troubles into her sister's more sympathetic ears.

"Not know what love is!"

Leah repeated the words bitterly to herself as she also left her seat and paced restlessly to and fro, her hand pressed to her aching heart.

Ah! if Ethel had only known how she had dreamt and thought of Percy Clements. How she had yearned for the sound of his voice—the touch of his hand, how the whole world to her was bounded by his presence, then, perhaps, she would have understood her silence, her lack of sympathy, and why she had not attempted to console with her for the loss of her discarded lover.

## CHAPTER VII.

A STILL, starry night in December. The earth is covered with a soft white carpet of dazzling snow. The moon, gleaming with transparent brilliancy, shines in the deep blue sky and glides the tops of the houses with glimpses of molten silver.

In Leah's pretty sitting-room silence reigns unbroken, save for the rustle of the night breeze, faint and sad, and the roar and din of city life which falls on the ear like the low rolling sound of distant thunder.

Standing there in the darkness by the wide French window, leaning her drooping head against the silken curtains and gazing out with unseeing eyes at the narrow wooden balcony which skirts the windows on that side of the house, Leah's thoughts naturally revert to the man she loves, for whom she has conceived such a sudden impulsive passion, while she struggles with her longing to see him, with the bitter consciousness that she has given her love unsought, unasked for, to one who cares not, nor wishes to receive it.

And in two days he will have left England, not to return for months, perhaps years.

Will he forget Ethel? Will Ethel cease to love him?

Will she ever meet him again when his heart is free?

"But at present there is no hope," she says to herself, sadly. "He has no thoughts for me, I am as nothing in his eyes. He loves Ethel, and she is pledged to him. He pities me. Let him keep his pity. He only maddens me with his cold friendship. His kind words cut me to the heart. I long, yet dread to meet him. My hand trembles when it touches his, my heart palpitates at the sound of his voice. Yet his hand never lingers in mine, his voice has no tenderness for me, his eyes no added glow when they meet mine. Can such a man ever change? I fear not," she sighs heavily. "How sad I feel to-night. What is this weight upon my heart—this feeling of

oppression? Is it, I wonder, a presentiment of coming evil, or—ah! What was that?"

A sound of voices, of footsteps outside advancing along the balcony had suddenly arrested her whole attention.

She stood breathless, listening intently.

Another moment and Percy Clements, with his arm resting caressingly round his cousin's slender waist, slowly passed and repassed, then paused beneath her window, their two familiar figures clearly discernible in the resplendent light of the moon.

Percy! Why was he here! What had he come for? Was it to say good-bye? Was this to be their last meeting?

Leah put out her hand and silently pushed the unclipped window open about an inch, then drew back into the shadow of the curtains.

She must hear his voice. It might be for the last time she says to herself in extenuation for that one act of eaves-dropping.

Better for her perhaps had she resisted that temptation to listen, and remained in ignorance of what had passed!

"Forgive me, dearest, I could not rest till I was assured that you thoroughly understood our plans," were the first words that fell on Leah's eagerly-strained ears. "I was afraid you might forget the place of meeting, or the hour, or something. You know I had so little time to explain. You will not fail to be there, Ethel!"

"Fail! not if I live!" was the girl's low fervent reply. "How fanciful you are to-night, Percy! Have I not risked all for your sake!—Have I not promised all you wished? And yet at the last moment you seem to doubt me—"

"Doubt you! of course not, darling! Why should I? But I cannot help feeling afraid that something might occur to prevent you leaving to-morrow, or that—"

"What?"

"You will regret the step you have taken and wish you had married a man who could have given you a home in England."

"How can you think that?" She looked up at him with one of her sweet appealing glances, her face, her hair, in part her slender figure bathed in the soft moonlight as she leant gracefully over the balcony's wooden rail. "How can you think that, Percy? You know that I love you; you know that I would sooner have you than the richest man in the whole world. That it was not for a home, but for love, your love alone, that I married you!"

He raised the fair face with his hand, and looked down fondly, admiringly, into those blue orbs that fell beneath his ardent gaze.

"My own—my fascinating little wife! Do you know that you are looking positively lovely to-night?" he said as he drew her closer to him, and pressed his lips to hers, all unconscious in that moment of rapture of the presence of a third person—of the proximity of the unhappy girl who unknown to them had witnessed those kisses, had heard that startling secret with a bitter pang of anguish.

His wife!

Then it was all over! All hope was dead!

She stood there for awhile dazed with cold and trouble, her great mournful eyes fixed with a kind of fascination upon those two young and graceful figures standing out in dark relief against the moonlit sky.

Presently they moved away, and at the same moment Leah became conscious of the presence of a servant in the room, lighting the lamps and raking up the fire which had burned low in the grate.

It was Sarah, the old housekeeper at 3, Hawthorn-place.

"Will you not have the curtains drawn, ma'am? It's a bitterly cold night."

Leah roused herself to reply in the affirmative, and leaving the window recess went and stood on the hearth.

She shivered visibly as she held out her hands to the flickering flames.

"Laws, miss, how white you are looking!" exclaimed the voluble domestic, glancing keenly at the pale, set face. "Ain't you well? Let me bring you a glass of something hot and strong. I



generally keeps a drop of whisky by me, being troubled with spasms. Or will you have a cup of coffee?" as Leah made a gesture of dissent. "I promised Miss Ethel to have some ready for her when she came in."

"Then you know that she is out?"  
"I do, and more than that I know whom she is with; and lucky for her, I say, that the master and mistress are away to-night, so that she can meet her cousin—as nice a young gentleman as ever lived! As for the master, he's that overbearing—nobody need consider him. I don't mean to for one at any rate, and I don't care who knows it!"

The woman spoke from a sense of injury, for finding that his old housekeeper resorted rather too frequently to that comfortable medicine which was becoming so indispensable to her imaginary ailments the manager had at last yielded to his wife's entreaties and given her a month's notice to leave his service; and now, like all discharged servants, she was in consequence inclined to be vindictive.

Miss Casella made no reply, and by her studied silence seemed to indicate to the other that her presence was no longer required. She shrank from the woman's prying eyes, and was thankful when at last Sarah withdrew, and she was again alone.

Alone! Yes, she was alone! She would always be alone! The only two people she had ever loved were now hopelessly lost to her. There was nothing in the whole wide world for her to live for!

She crouched over the fire, staring into the bright red embers, her eyes luminous with unshed tears, her chin sunk on her chest, her whole frame trembling with intense emotion.

But at last the falling of a coal roused her from her dreary meditations.

She rose from her chair slowly, and with an air of utter weariness crossed the apartment to the one adjoining—her bedroom—which was dimly lighted.

She paced the floor restlessly, gazing at the familiar objects vacantly with her sorrowful eyes.

Presently she ceased her aimless wanderings, and paused before a large engraving which had suddenly arrested her morbid attention.

The picture was supposed to represent the fine handsome figure of Chatterton just after he had taken poison, as he lay in his miserable garret in the motionless abandonment of death, one hand clasping the fatal bottle, his torn manuscripts lying scattered on the floor, the moonlight streaming through the latticed window, the candle burning low in its last dying flicker.

The expression of the face was inexpressibly sad and peaceful, and fascinated her as it never had done before. She could not take her eyes from it.

"He died! he could not live! His heart like mine was broken!" she whispered. And then at some sudden thought she shivered, and the pallor of her face deepened.

"Why not?—why endure this unceasing misery longer? It will be so sweet to rest!" she murmured, as with a swift frenzied movement, as if fearing to fail in her resolution, she again crossed to the outer room, and unlocking a tiny work-box which stood on the plush bordered mantel piece she brought to light a small bottle, apparently half full of some dark-coloured liquid.

With this in her hand she stood for a moment, still and thoughtful.

Suddenly someone knocked and entered the room.

She started and turned pale, as one caught in a guilty act.

It was Sarah with the coffee, and in another moment the woman stood by her side, fixedly gazing with wide open frightened eyes at the bottle she held in her hand.

"What do you want? What are you staring at?" Leah asked, impatiently.

"That bottle—"

"Well, what of it? It is only chloral. I am going to take a few drops to make me sleep."

"Oh, Miss Casella, take care! You might

drink too much," the woman said, as with one keen, anxious glance at the girl's white tear-stained face she reluctantly left the room.

"No, not too much—enough to make me sleep—sleep on for ever!" Leah whispered as she poured the whole contents of the bottle into the cup of coffee which Sarah had placed upon a side table.

Then she raised it to her lips, but ere she drank, a sudden thought, something she had forgotten, seemed to occur to her, and she glanced searchingly round the room.

"I must not let anyone be blamed for my work. Ah!" as her eyes fell on a writing-case lying on the table. "There will be paper—a pencil there. A line—just a word to explain!"

She passed again into the inner room and sank into a low seat near the light, writing with her back to the door. Her pencil moved slowly and laboriously over the paper. It was a difficult task for her to concentrate her thoughts.

She had barely finished the letter—which she sealed and addressed to Mrs. Warburton—when the outer door again suddenly opened and Ethel, smiling, happy, radiant, entered the room.

How lovely she looked! Her slight, graceful form attired in a gown of some bright coloured material, her clear cut face dazzling in its creamy fairness and delicately tinted with the flush of excitement; natural curls of golden hair fell softly over her low white brow, and shining in her deep, lustrous eyes, reflecting the gladness of her heart, was the tender light of new-found happiness and certain love.

Leah had never seen her look so fair, and at the sight of that sudden vision of beauty she was conscious of a bitter pang of jealousy.

"Are you still up, Leah? Do you know how late it is? I expected to find you sleeping."

"Then why did you come?"

"Just to kiss you, dear—to say good-night."

"Or rather good-bye."

"Goodbye!"

"Yes, I know all, Ethel. You are married. You cannot deceive me."

For a moment Ethel looked startled.

"Who told you that?" she asked, in a low, strained voice of surprise.

"No one. I saw you meet Percy to-night. I heard him call you his wife. Is it not true?"

"Yes." Then after a lengthened pause, "You are not angry with me, Leah?" pleadingly.

"Angry! Why should I be angry!" still with her face hidden from the other's gaze.

(Continued on page 520.)

## BERYL'S MARRIAGE.

—30—

### CHAPTER XI.

OWING to the close vicinity of the church to the Oaks, Denis Adair and his wife had no chance of any private conversation on their homeward drive.

He took her hand in his; it felt cold as ice, and she did not return his pressure, but let her little fingers stay still and impassive in his grasp.

He whispered words of fond endearment, but before he had time to wonder at her silence they were at the Oaks, and Mrs. Dent (who must have run home through the churchyard to get there first) came forward all smiles to receive them.

Sir Denis often recalled the few hours that followed as among the most wretched of his life, just as the day itself was one of bitter disappointment to him.

He was strangely, painfully conscious that Beryl avoided him and would not meet his eyes, otherwise she was (or seemed to be) in brilliant spirits.

Her cheeks had recovered their bloom, her eyes their brightness, she looked her loveliest, and a murmur of admiration ran through the room as she passed the assembled guests on her way upstairs to change her bridal array for her travelling dress.

"May you always be as happy, darling, as you

are to-day," murmured Aunt Julia, as she moved the costly veil.

"I am sure I shall be that," said Beryl, with a strange little smile; "with something else for me, dear aunt."

Mrs. Dent's eyes grew dim with tears; she had never quite realized before how much she loved the girl she had never been able to understand.

The good-byes were said at last and the happy pair were fairly off. They were to drive to London Bridge and thence take the train to Folkestone.

Careful of Beryl in all things, Sir Denis intended to stay for one night at the fair Kentish watering-place, and cross the Channel by daylight on the morrow.

"Tired, my darling!" he asked her, as they drove through the Clapton-road, where the street lamps were already lighted, for the short winter's day was closing in.

"Very," said Beryl, in a faint, weary voice, "it has been such a long day."

She seemed indisposed for conversation and leant back in her corner of the brougham.

Adair was troubled; never before had he seen her in this mood. Her manner was so cold and distant that it positively chilled him.

It was a crowded train, and Sir Denis was unable to secure a reserved carriage. How he hated the two quiet, elderly ladies who occupied the two further seats in the compartment!

Beryl closed her eyes and seemed asleep.

He watched her anxiously, spreading a second rug over her when he fancied she shivered, but she gave no sign of gratitude; altogether it was as dreary a wedding journey as could be imagined.

Lady Adair had no maid; she was accustomed to wait on herself, and had positively refused to take a personal attendant with her on her travels.

"If I have to be a grand lady when we settle down at the Court I will engage one then," she told Mrs. Dent; "but I am sure a maid would be a dreadful nuisance while we are abroad."

Their hotel was reached at last, and they were shown to the suite of apartments which had been engaged for them.

"I ordered dinner at eight," said Sir Denis. "I thought we should not care for the *table d'hôte*."

She looked at him fixedly, again he thought her expression strange; it was not unlike that seen in pictures to an accusing angel.

"I don't want any dinner," said Beryl; "go and have yours while I unpack. You will find me here when you come back."

He tried to persuade her to change her mind, but she persisted in her refusal to dine with him and at last he had to leave her to herself.

He did not eat much; he felt, poor fellow, as though every morsel would choke him.

It was not long before he again appeared in the pretty sitting-room.

Beryl was there leaning back in an elbow chair, her dress a soft cashmere tea gown of a pale blue colour; she looked lovelier than ever Denis thought as he bent over her and tenderly asked if she felt better.

"I am perfectly well. I want to talk to you, Denis, please sit down."

For he was leaning over the back of her chair, one hand playing carelessly with her soft hair.

"Well, what is it, sweetheart?" he asked, as he took a low chair by her side. "I don't think you are very kind to me, Beryl. I have not seen you since Monday night, and now you seem to want to keep me as far away from you as possible!"

She was playing very nervously with her hands; the new wedding ring on the left glittered with an intense brightness.

"I want to tell you that you need not go on acting a part any longer," she said, in a dull, despairing tone, which was sadder far than a storm of passionate tears. "I know everything now, and you can't deceive me any longer."

Sir Denis started. Surely never before did a wife of a few hours speak so strangely to her husband. He was unutterably hurt and wounded, but he kept his temper by an effort. She had been ill. She was, they had warned him, morbidly sensitive; she could not know what she was saying.

"You are talking very strangely, dear," he

said, at last. "I am not acting a part. I have never deceived you. I was your faithful lover, I am now your devoted husband. What fancy have you taken up? only tell me, and I can explain it."

She looked at him fixedly with her beautiful mournful eyes.

"It is no use! You have killed my faith; nothing in the world can restore a broken trust!"

"But, my dear child," cried Sir Denis, getting angry; "you are talking in riddles. We parted on Monday night without a word of this strange fancy. I can have done nothing since to make you doubt me; and now you accuse me of—well, I hardly know what!"

"Your own conscience will tell you," said Beryl, sadly, "at least it ought."

"Then my conscience is singularly remiss in its duty," returned Sir Denis, coldly, "for it accuses me of no wrong against you. Beryl," he went on passionately, "for Heaven's sake don't blight our happiness for an idle fancy. I have never deceived you. I am your faithful lover! Look up, dear, and kiss me! Don't spoil our wedding-day like this!"

She shook her head slowly.

"It is no use, Denis; I know everything," she persisted.

"But I can't think what there is for you to know that would induce you to behave like this!"

"I know why you married me," she said, slowly; her eyes fixed on the ground, almost as though she feared to meet his glance.

"I married you because I loved you," he retorted, "and because I was fool enough to believe you loved me back again; it seems I was mistaken!"

She shook her head.

"You did not love me. If you had loved me you would have told me so at Broadgate. You waited until you heard that I was an heiress. When you came to the Oaks you knew already about my miserable money."

Sir Denis was silent. How he wished he had not taken Mrs. Dent's advice. It was cruelly hard for him to defend himself now, because there was just a grain of truth in Beryl's accusation.

He did love her. He had loved her even at Broadgate; but the fact remained that he would never have proposed to her if she had been penniless.

"You see," said Beryl, bitterly, "you can't deny it."

He spoke then, and if his words were cold remember that he dearly loved his wife, and she was trying him past endurance.

"In your present frame of mind, Beryl, it is useless for me to deny anything; you are not in a fit state to hear reason."

"I am quite ready to hear your explanation, only I know that you can have none. You loved another, but she was poor, so you forsook her for my miserable money."

"May Heaven forgive you," cried Denis Adair, "for such a baseless charge! Now, listen, you shall hear the truth, though you are not likely to believe it. I loved you when we were at Broadgate, but I believed you penniless. My circumstances were such that I could not marry a portionless wife, therefore I came away without telling you my affection."

"Just so. You married me for my money."

"Hush!" he said, angrily, "you had better hear me out. The Adairs are an old family; their name has been known in Kent for centuries; I am the last of my race. Though my old home was nearly in ruins I loved it with an intensity you could not understand."

"Of course not," she retorted; "I am a mere nobody. I can't understand what it feels like to have an old name, or a house that has belonged to one's family for centuries."

Sir Denis went on without heeding this taunt.

"My estate was mortgaged for twenty-two thousand pounds. I knew the man who had advanced the money would not foreclose while I remained single. If I married he would have done so at once. Supposing I had chosen a penniless wife the old home of my ancestors

would have passed to a stranger, and I should have brought the woman I loved into grinding poverty."

Lady Adair maintained a stony silence.

"You women don't understand life," went on Sir Denis, passionately; "no doubt you would think it fine, unselfish, to marry a girl without a home to give her or means to provide her with the common necessities of her position. Nobles to bring children into the world who must sink to a lower rank than their father's because he has no means to educate or start them in life. Well, I don't think so. I hold that a man is selfish who for what he calls love entails a hard life of bitter struggling on his wife and denies his children the advantages which should be their birthright. Acting up to my opinions I left Broadgate without telling you of my love."

"And then —?"

"It is not true to say that when I went to Clapton I still believed you poor. I had heard from Lady Lester that you had a fortune, but I had no idea of its amount. I thought at the very most it was thirty thousand pounds. When your uncle told me the extent of your wealth I saw I was no fit match for you. I told him as much."

"And he —?"

"Mr. Dent thought differently. He knew I loved you, and he said when love was on both sides it mattered little who had the money. For the rest he begged me as a favour to conceal from you that I knew you had any fortune at all. He said you were morbidly afraid of being married for your money, and that the best chance for our future happiness was for you to believe I proposed to you still deeming you the penniless little girl I had thought you at Broadgate. Against my every instinct I consented."

She spoke no word; she shed no tear; a blank silence followed; a silence so long and painful that when the little gilt clock on the mantle piece chimed the hour it seemed to Sir Denis as loud as the report of a cannon, and Beryl gave a start of nervous terror.

"You are half worn out already," said her husband. "Beryl, you had better put off this discussion till to-morrow. You are not fit for it now."

"I would rather finish it to-night," she said wearily, "there is not much more to say."

"There is a great deal," he retorted. "I won't ask how you discovered what you are pleased to call my deception. Or who did me the honour to blacken my character in your eyes, but I do demand to know this. Why, having been enlightened as to my misdeeds, did you do me the honour to take my name to-day?"

His eyes glittered with anger. There was no mistaking the passion in his voice. Denis Adair was not a saint, only a man, like other men. His wife had tried him terribly; she had trampled on the best feelings of his nature, and he was in no mood to spare her now.

"Do you ask why I married you?"

"Precisely."

"Because I loved you too much to give you up," she confessed at last, "because you had already received part of the price. Besides, all men are alike. With my fortune I was at their mercy. I was sure to be married for what I had, not what I was. What did it matter if it was sooner or later?"

"I can't understand you."

"I can't understand myself," she said slowly; "only it seemed to me that as you had deceived me nothing else mattered. It would have half-killed my aunt if the engagement had been broken off within two days of the wedding, and I was so tired I didn't feel as if I could go through the scene that must have taken place. Besides," her voice sank to a whisper, "I should have been ashamed for anyone to know how miserably I had been deceived."

"In short," said Sir Denis, bitterly, "you sacrificed me to your pride. You gave me an unwilling wife, rather than face a few unpleasant disclosures. I am much obliged to you."

Beryl winced; never in her life had she been spoken to after this manner. She had believed

herself a victim, something akin to a martyr, and it rather puzzled her to find that Sir Denis considered himself also an aggrieved party.

"I repeat," he said bitterly, "why did you marry me? Feeling as you did, what chance of happiness was there for either of us?"

"I thought you would not care."

"In plain English, you thought that having secured your fortune I did not care what sort of a wife accompanied it. Let me tell you you were mistaken. I am turned thirty. If I had only wanted to clear off the encumbrances on my estate and sell a share of my title I might have done so years ago, while you were a child. I own I love my home dearly; but I would never have redeemed it at such a price; I would rather the mortgagee had foreclosed and taken possession of my birthplace than have given my mother's name to a woman who does not love me, and who can think such cruel things of me as you do!"

"In fact you regret our marriage," she asked tentatively; hoping, woman like, that he would contradict her.

"I regret it from the bottom of my heart. The day I looked forward to so joyously has been the most miserable of my life."

A most uncomfortable feeling of remorse attacked Beryl. Was it possible she had been deceived, and that Denis was not the monster of iniquity she had believed him? But no; she remembered the testimony she had listened to only the day before. She recalled the sad blank face of the girl he had forsaken for her wealth. No; Denis was cruel and false; and yet deep down in Beryl's heart was a strange feeling of gladness that she was his wife; no other woman could bear that title while she lived.

"It is getting late," said Denis Adair, coldly; "but I believe you expressed a wish to settle this discussion to-night."

"I think there is no more to say," said Beryl, wishing with strange inconsistency that he would fling his arms round her and strain her to his heart, kissing her as he swore that the past was dead and buried in the present, and for the future he would be hers and hers only. She might not have believed him, but oh, if he would have tried.

Nothing was further from Denis Adair's thought.

He had risen some time since and now stood opposite his wife looking down on her with a strange mixture of anger and pity. She looked so fragile and delicate. All the manhood in him longed to cherish her and protect her from any trouble; but she had spoken words he could not easily forgive, and could less easily forget, so he decided the first advance towards reconciliation must come from her.

There was this further barrier between them; that he did not even yet know all the poison which had been poured into Beryl's ears. She in her proud reserve would not—could not—be explicit. She made her charge so vaguely that Sir Denis thought it a foolish fancy. If he had known of the cruel plot formed to part him and Beryl; if he had had any idea of how they had both been tricked, all his sympathy would have been with his girl-wife.

"There is a great deal more to say," he retorted passionately; "you have done me the honour to take my name whilst believing me the basest of mankind. May I inquire what you intend to do in future? You will hardly care for my society. I don't fancy the Dents are the kind of people to receive as an inmate a wife living apart from her husband. I should think the best plan would be for you to have an establishment of your own, where you can enjoy your freedom to the fullest extent. You can give out that I am travelling. People get used to that sort of thing. We shall only be considered a fashionable couple."

"And you would like that?"

"I shall not like anything," he returned coldly; "but we must arrange something. I hold the honour of my name very dear, and I won't have anything done that can cast a slur on it."

"I won't live alone," said Beryl; "the solitude would drive me mad. If you send me away, Denis, I shall go back to the Oaks and make



Aunt Julia take me in; she can't turn me into the streets."

He thought of the little forlorn figure he had seen sitting in the firelight at the Oaks just six weeks ago, then of the happy time of his courtship, an the bright dreams he had formed for his married life, all shattered now; but still, just because of the happiness of those past weeks, he could not be hard upon his wife.

"My dear," he said, in a strangely solemn tone, out of which all the scorn and contempt had fled, giving place to a grave, sad reproach, "I don't think you know what you want yourself. If you tell me your wishes I will faithfully try to carry them out, just as," a sob in his voice nearly choked him, "I would have tried to fulfill the vows I made to-day in Clapton Church—if you had let me."

There came a long, long silence. Oh, why did she not throw herself into his arms and tell him she wanted nothing but his love? She could forgive him anything in the past, so that he was true to her now. Oh, why did she not conquer her reserve, and tell him what she had heard word for word? But alas! she let the opportunity pass beyond recall.

"I thought that we could live together," said the girl, slowly, "in the same house, I mean, and that—if we were careful, no one need know we were—not like other people."

"You proposed, in fact, that we should live two separate existences under one roof," he said, coldly, "that you would be, in fact, my wife in name only?"

"Something like it."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"We have made such a muddle of things, nothing matters now very much. We can try the experiment if you like. You know, I suppose, here he flushed a dull scarlet, "a certain proportion of your fortune is left in my hands for the expenses of our joint home! I would far rather give you back every penny. I should even like to get a new mortgage on the place and refund the money of yours spent in redeeming it; but if your scheme is carried out this would be impossible. If you remain, even nominally, with me, I must keep up an establishment suited to your wealth."

"I would rather stay with you, Denis."

He sighed.

"I don't think you know what you are suggesting; but we can try it for a time. You may rest assured of one thing, Beryl, I shall never again attempt to 'act a part,' as you put it. The love I felt for you—and, by Heaven, it was the best part of my being—you have done your best to kill. What remains of it, its cold, grey ashes, will be locked in my own heart—you will not be troubled with them. You shall have your wish, and we will live out our lives as strangers."

She answered nothing, only shivered a little as she sat, which Sir Denis, despite his anger, was quick to notice.

"You had better go to bed," he said, coldly. "It is very late, and you have had a long, exciting day."

He held open the door for her to pass through. He would not meet the piteous unhappy gaze of her violet eyes; he would not see the snowflake of a hand extended to him, but in his way he suffered as much as his wife, and when she was gone he flung his face on his two arms, and, strong man that he was, sobbed aloud in his anguish.

So ended Beryl's wedding day.

## CHAPTER XII.

MR. BLAKE waited in no little anxiety for the return of his accomplice. When a man who, on the whole, has led a decorous respectable life up to middle age suddenly stoops to an act of deliberate villainy, he is generally so much ashamed of it as to want it got over as speedily possible.

It cannot be said that the parvenu doubted Dick Chesney's good will. He knew the man had so much at stake himself that he would do his best

to frustrate the Adair marriage; but Blake was by no means sure of his secretary's ability, and was troubled at receiving very few letters from him during his stay in London, and these of the briefest description. Therefore when on the eve of Beryl's wedding, her step-uncle appeared in his employer's private sanctum unexpected, unannounced, his face wearing an air of unmistakable satisfaction, Mr. Blake was much relieved.

"Fancy your turning up like this without a word or wire! It's all right I take it from your face."

"As right as a trivet," and Dick believed what he said. He had never dreamed that Beryl Chesney's love could survive the revelation made to her sufficiently to allow her to marry Sir Denis after all.

"Then Miss Nugent was a trump card, eh? Our young gentleman had a flirtation in that quarter?"

"No, he hadn't. If you'll believe me, Mr. Blake, I don't think Adair had ever had an 'affair' of any sort till he met my niece; but all the same, Miss Nugent was a trump card, and without her I could have done nothing."

And then he detailed his scheme. A scheme as clever as it was cruel, and which would never have succeeded but for Audrey Nugent's poverty, and a kind of defiant jealousy which the troubled over-worked typist had always entertained for girls more happily situated than herself.

If she had been a man Audrey would have been an ardent socialist. Born of the feeble sex, and knowing absolutely nothing of politics, her feelings found vent in a bitter hatred of those women whose lot had fallen in easier places than her own.

She and Nell were ladies born, she argued. They could have done credit to any advantages offered them, but they had to starve in an Islington lodging, while girls mentally their inferiors had every luxury at command.

Dick Chesney made acquaintance with Audrey by taking her a few articles to type, then he mentioned the name of Denis Adair, and found that the baronet was regarded by her as a hero, almost as a demi-god.

"He is engaged to be married," she said, bitterly. "I dare say the woman isn't worthy of him. The best men are always unfortunate in their marriage."

And then Dick painted Beryl as an idle frivolous heiress, with all the faults of the fashionable world, and boldly asserted she was only marrying Sir Denis for his title.

He came again. Nell's illness had begun by now, and he showed his hand more openly. He offered Audrey fifty pounds if she would call on Beryl Chesney and represent herself as the sometime fiancée of Denis Adair, whom he had forsaken for Beryl's gold.

Having been at Broadgate and known of Beryl's accident there Dick was of course able to coach Audrey thoroughly for her part. His knowledge of the household at the Oaks also stood him in good stead; but his greatest difficulty came from the girl herself. At first Audrey Nugent point blank refused to assist in his vile plan, saying she would starve rather than touch money earned by playing so cruel a part.

But Nell's illness increased. The doctor's verdict on her state, the sudden failure of one source of employment, all played into Dick Chesney's hands.

Again that prejudice of Audrey's against happier girls worked in his favour. Why—the typist asked herself—should she let Nell die for want of change of air, just to save this rich young lady a pang? If Miss Chesney were the ambitious, heartless maiden her kinsman represented her, surely it was a good deed to save Sir Denis from such a wife. If the heiress really loved him she would be faithful to him through it all.

On one thing Audrey insisted, that Dick Chesney should pay her in advance. She must be out of London as soon as possible after her interview with Beryl. If the heiress told her fiancée of Miss Nugent's visit he would seek her at once and demand an explanation.

Audrey simply could not face him. He had been kindness itself to her and Nell. She was repaying him by the blackest, basest ingratitude, so her evil work, once accomplished, she must hide herself from his sight.

It was not Audrey who had removed the letter sent with the work she had taken home, but Dick Chesney, who, not feeling sure of the girl's fidelity, thought she might have betrayed him, and so possessed himself of her note.

"You would be a far better wife for Adair than that dressed-up doll, Beryl Chesney," Dick had told her. "Depend upon it when she throws him over he will turn to you for consolation."

"Not if she tells him——"

"She won't. Besides, I have spared your feelings. There is no surname on the passionate love letters I have forged so skillfully; all through the object of Adair's devotion is addressed as 'Nell.'"

Well, Audrey yielded; anxiety for her sister, desperate need of money, class prejudice, all had their part in it; but, stronger than all, was the hope Dick had introduced so artfully, "Depend upon it he will turn to you for consolation."

Why should he not?

He liked to talk to her; they had many things in common. He always seemed interested when he came to Hinton-street. He had gone out of his way to be kind to them from the first; it would not be the only time pity had ripened into love.

So, Hinton-street left behind her for ever, Audrey Nugent left the quiet Temperance Hotel, where she and Nell were staying for two nights, and went down to the Oaks. Owing to the servants taking her for one of the dressmaker's assistants there was not the slightest difficulty made about admitting her, and she was shown straight into Beryl's dressing-room, where the bride-elect sat alone.

They looked at each other—the child of wealth and the daughter of toil; strange to say, both noted at once the strange, shadowy resemblance which had struck Sir Denis Adair.

"I might look like that if I had had an easy life like hers," thought Audrey, while an awful dread seized the other girl that some day sorrow and trial might change her to the semblance of her visitor.

If there had been any pity in Audrey's heart it faded then. The sight of Beryl's beauty seemed to rouse every evil instinct of her nature.

"I think you come from Mrs. Venn!" began Beryl. "What dresses have you brought?" "I have come from myself, Miss Chesney," said the other girl, bitterly, "to tell you of a great wrong you are committing, and beg you to pause before it is too late."

"I don't understand," said Beryl, in a bewildered tone; "I never saw you before; I don't even know your name."

"And yet you have stolen my sister's lover," cried Audrey, passionately. "Denis Adair would have been true to my little Nell but for you and your cursed gold."

Beryl listened like a creature in a dream; but once started Audrey went on fluently with her task. She declared that Denis Adair had won her sister's love, that he had promised to marry her, and until he went to Broadgate that summer they had never doubted him. Since his return he had grown colder, his visits became few and far between, though he still sometimes talked of marriage.

The night before Audrey had read in a fashionable paper that Sir Denis Adair and the great heiress, Miss Chesney, were to be married on the following Thursday. She had started at once to tell her story to the young lady.

But for that strain of morbid suspicion in Beryl's nature she might have failed; but, alas! Beryl Chesney had never felt quite easy because Denis Adair had left her at Broadgate with his love untold.

In an evil hour she agreed to go with Audrey Nugent to the hotel and see her sister. The forged love letters she had read already.

Nell was lying just where Audrey had left her in bed, so covered with wraps that the deformity



"THE DAY I LOOKED FORWARD TO SO JOYOUSLY HAS BEEN THE MOST MISERABLE OF MY LIFE," SAID DENIS.

did not show, and only her sweet pale face was visible.

"I don't ask you to give Sir Denis back to Nell," Audrey had said, bitterly; "she is dying of a broken heart, and I don't want her to see his bold bad face again; she can't last above a week or two; it isn't much to ask you to put off your wedding."

"If your story is true, I shall never marry Sir Denis Adair—never even see his face again," said Beryl.

She stood by Nell's sofa and looked at her pityingly. Little as Beryl knew of illness she knew that in one thing her strange visitor had spoken truly. That poor girl could not long stand in her path.

She would not suffer Audrey to arouse her sister, who still slept the deep heavy sleep of exhaustion. She offered no money, spoke no pity; but she went out from the little fourth-rate hotel, which was more properly a coffee-house, with a look on her face nigh to despair.

She soon came to one of those disused burial grounds which the wisdom of the present century has changed into gardens for the people.

She sat down on a bench (though it was December) and tried to face her future and decide the question, should she break off her engagement?

To Beryl "Nell" was beyond the consequences of her decision. To the girl's sensitive mind the treachery against Nell had already been committed. She would live at most a week or two, and Denis was not likely to go back to her. Besides, in learning of his falseness, Nell had gone through the deep waters, life had no more suffering for her. No, Beryl's rival was dying. The only woman whose claim to Denis was stronger than her own would soon be in the grave; therefore she injured no one by keeping her promise.

Beryl had told Audrey that if the story were true she would never marry Denis Adair; but if she broke off her engagement she must tell her uncle and aunt the reason, and this she could not—would not do.

She could not let them know how she had been deceived; and she loved him still. Many voices cannot quench a love like hers; so after two hours of agony, so intense that it seemed to have turned her heart to stone, Beryl's choice was made up. Come what or was she would go through with Thursday's ceremony.

Not till they were far away from Clapton would she tell Denis Adair she knew him as he was.

But the conspirators, who talked so cheerfully of their success, had of course no idea of this.

Audrey Nugent in her last interview with Dick Chesney assured him the heiress had believed her implicitly, and that she was quite convinced of Sir Denis Adair's treachery; and then Audrey had taken her dying sister to the Isle of Wight, and was waiting sadly for the end, buoyed up in her anguish at losing Nell by the hope so carefully instilled by Dick Chesney that Sir Denis in his loneliness and desolation would turn to her for consolation.

Would he?

Meanwhile, thanks to the price of her crime, she had a good sum of money in hand, and what was more wonderful still the Ventnor Doctor did not take nearly such a hopeless view of Nell's state as his London confrère.

"She will never be quite well—never anything but an invalid; but I really don't see that she is in such immediate danger," he said, kindly. "Oh, yes, shut up in a London lodging through all the winter I daresay she would have faded away; but in this beautiful mild climate, Miss Nugent, I really don't see why you may not hope to keep her with you at least a few months longer."

"Thank Heaven!" breathed Audrey; but when she was alone an awful burden of remorse seized her. She was not worthy to thank Heaven or to take that name upon her lips. She had obtained Nell's life—if it were spared—by a terrible crime—a crime so awful that even now she could hardly think of it without a shudder.

"It's her fault," she muttered, "she should

not have been so ready to believe evil of her lover. If Denis Adair had cared for me I'd have been true to him through good report and ill."

Still for his sake, the man she loved, Audrey repented her duplicity, and it was therefore with mingled relief and pain that she read in the *Morning Post* for December 20th,—

"On the 18th inst., at St. Ursula's, Clapton, by the vicar of the parish, Sir Denis Adair, Baronet, of Adair Court, Kent, to Beryl, granddaughter and heiress of the late Joshua Chesney, of Cheapside."

But if Audrey's feelings were mingled on reading this announcement, those of Mr. Blake and his secretary were of unmitigated bitterness.

"Foiled!" cried Dick, angrily, "that girl must have played me false."

"We've lost," said Mr. Blake, gloomily; "we're not in this game. I only hope he'll run through every penny of her fortune and come to me for another mortgage on the estate. He shouldn't escape a second time."

(To be continued.)

THE Hampton Court vine is more than 150 years old, and nearly as many feet in length; its stem is 32in. in circumference. In a good season it will yield more than 2,000 bunches of fine grapes, weighing on an average 17oz. each bunch, or, in the whole, nearly one ton. They are of the finest black Hamburg kind, and are said to be reserved chiefly for the Queen's table.

A fish exerts its great propulsive power with its tail, not with its fins. The paddle-wheel was made on the fin theory of propulsion, and the screw-propeller had its origin in noting the action of the tail. It is now shown that the fins of the tail actually perform the evolutions described by the propeller blades, and that the fish in its sinuous motion through the water depends on the torsional of the tail to give it power.





"DO NOT MOVE, I BREECH YOU," SPOKE A WELL-REMEMBERED VOICE. "YOU ARE LOVELY—YOU ARE PERFECT!"

## THE ROMANCE OF IVY MOSS.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### DOUBTS AND FEARS.

A WEEK had gone by since the fateful day on which Ivy Moss had first seen Ronald Dundas; or rather, to be accurate, just a whole week had now elapsed since the date of their second meeting—the night when he came to her open lattice to tell her that he had fancied the roof was on fire.

When Ivy, rather awkwardly, related to her grandfather this instance of Mr. Dundas's good nature, the old man shook his head slowly and smiled straight into the girl's eyes.

"No, no, Ivy dear—it won't do!" he remarked sadly.

"It won't do! What won't do, grandfather?" said she wonderingly.

"That mysterious young friend of yours no more believed the roof of Dell Cottage was on fire, than he believed that it was your poor nervous old granny whom he saw sitting at the lighted window. Would he have come running over the downs in the dark, think you, child, to tell my poor old Emma that the place was on fire when he knew quite well all the time that it wasn't. No, no. Young men will be young men I suppose; and—and—well, it will surely come to pass by-and-by. In some way or other it must come to pass in the end. And I wonder how I shall bear it then—eh, my little Ivy?"

"Bear what?" she asked, rendered vaguely uncomfortable by his sorrowful look and tone. "I do not understand you, grandfather!"

But he answered her evasively, capping her question with another.

"You would not care, would you, my dear little girl, to spend the whole of your lifetime here at this cottage in the dell?" he said wistfully. "There is a bigger and a brighter world beyond—somewhere else—you know. And yet—"

and yet it might be best for you, dear. You are safe here with me. Who knows?"

"I should never care to go away from you, grandfather," answered Ivy, earnestly. And at the time she meant it from her heart.

"Young men!" here put in the grandmother, in her sniffing, grumbling way, her witch-like nut-cracker nose and chin going up and down as she spoke—"I never heard any good of young men yet. They are all alike at bottom—all vicious, all selfish, all naturally bad-inclined; only some of 'em are quieter and deeper than others; and some are rich, and some are poor, and some are middling off—that's the only difference. Young men, ugh! Take my advice, Ivy, and have nothing to say to them; even should you ever get the chance!"

And oh! what an interminable week it had seemed to Ivy; though it was possible to be out and about all day long, and to roam beneath the summer sky as far as one pleased! July was close at hand, and the weather was simply glorious; the grandmother's doleful predictions as to a miserable summer would assuredly never be verified.

At any other time this gracious weather would have filled the heart of Ivy with unspeakable joy, and she would have been singing from morning until night.

She was angry almost with herself for not feeling more glad and light-hearted—it seemed to her downright wicked when the world about her was so beautiful—angry for being conscious of the vague discontent and disappointment which of late had crept into her heart.

During the whole of that interminable past week she had neither once met, nor even once seen, her new friend, Mr. Ronald Dundas.

Whither had he gone?

Had he for some reason or other left Breezy Point quite suddenly, and was he coming back there never any more?

Could it then be—oh, could it then be possible

that she would never see him out on the downs again!

"I want to see him once more—yes, I do want to see him once more!" she said aloud to herself, with a petulant stamp on the turf, and the fresh salt air from the distant sea blowing all round her, one morning. "For I particularly want to give him a piece of my mind—don't I Pincher?—because he did hurt you on that night, with a flint or something, didn't he, doggie dear! You hopped about on three legs for more than two days afterwards; though of course he didn't mean to, and couldn't help it, Pincher, in the dark."

Pincher, for sympathy, wagged his poor coarse stump of a tail, and jumped repeatedly up Ivy's cotton gown, leaving dirty paw-marks behind him.

On the eighth day of Ivy's new strange feeling of loneliness and unrest the old man, her grandfather, announced at breakfast that he had received a business letter, and was going away that night.

No letters ever came to that cottage in the hollow on the downs, except it was a "business one" for the old man himself.

"Going away again, Daniel?" whined the grandmother. "For long?"

"For about the same time as usual," answered the grandfather, gently.

"Where this time?" inquired the old woman, huskily. "Eh, Daniel?"

Her knotted lean hands were trembling so painfully that the black-handled knife and fork rattled together over the rasher in the plate before her.

"What silly questions you ask, Emma," the old man replied, in the same gentle way. "You know that I invariably go to London to see my friends. Doubtless I may be absent for a week or ten days."

"I shall not sleep a wink the whole time you're away," sniffed the grandmother, taking her tea in scalding gulps, the rim of her cup knocking audibly against her few long, rat-like teeth.

"I shall be ill and in my grave before you come back, Daniel, you see if I ain't."

"We know that old story," the old man said, his voice mild enough, but his pale blue watery eyes turned sternly on the quailing old hag before him. "Don't you be a fool, Emma!"

"You know I can't help it," returned she, with something between a gasp and a sob. "It's my infirmity, Daniel."

"Well, you had better not get frightening my little girl here out of her wits with those absurd nerves of yours," observed Ivy's grandfather, with his quiet smile.

"I can't help it if I do," said the old woman, in sullen reply.

A calm and sunny evening arrived, and the old man prepared to set out on his journey.

He kissed the grandmother in the porch, and bade her good-bye. She merely shivered and began to cry, and wiped away her tears in the tail of her old black skirt.

But Ivy accompanied her grandfather down to the green garden gate.

It made her very miserable to see him going away so soon again, and, indeed, like the grandmother's, the tears had risen to Ivy's eyes.

Their leave-taking was over, and then the old man turned and said, rather suddenly, "By-the-by, my dear little girl, you have not seen any thing of that Mr.—what is his name—Mr. Ronald Dundas, lately, have you?"

This was unexpected—entirely so.

Ivy's heart, for seconds, seemed to cease its beating. However, she managed to say, with tolerable ease and carelessness,—

"Mr. Dundas, grandfather? Oh, no, I should have mentioned it if I had. I fancy he has left the neighbourhood. I am sure I should have met him on the downs somewhere if he were still lodging with the Burdens at Breezy Point."

"Humph! Then I wonder if he really is gone away!" observed the old man, thoughtfully, speaking more to himself than to Ivy.

Then he embraced her once more, murmuring audibly,—

"My poor little girl, my dear little girl! Heaven bless and keep you until I return!"

And in the next moment he was gone.

Ivy watched the old man and his carpet bag until the undulations of the downs and the sunset light took him from her view; and then she turned away from the gate forlornly.

"I hope the carrier will be late, and I hope the trains will be late," sobbed the witch-faced old woman in the porch, illogically, "and then he won't get to London till the morning!"

By half-past two o'clock on the following afternoon, Ivy, with her novel and her dog Pincher, were together out upon the downs, leaving the grandmother at home in the tidied up kitchen, sewing dolorously by the open window.

The two fleshless cows were browsing within ear-shot of home, and lashing their ribs with their tails, to scatter the teasing flies. The fowls were dusting themselves by the yard-gate. In the fifth of the yard itself the pigs were sprawling, and grunting with closed eyes under the noon-tide sun.

Of course there now existed no earthly reason why Ivy should hesitate to venture near her favourite gorse-bushes and the sand-pits, where it was always so shady and so still.

No longer in her so doing could there be seen anything bold and expectant. For had not Mr. Dundas vanished from the Burdens' farmhouse, so that in all likelihood she would never again see eyes on him? Well, next summer, perhaps—who could tell!—he might reappear at Breezy Point, to sketch and paint upon the downs. It was within the range of possibility. Heigho, would next summer ever come?

Ivy sat down upon a grassy hillock, and opened her book leisurely. Pincher was snuffing and scampering among the rabbit-burrows; but the girl neither saw nor heard him. With her novel before her she sat and dreamed with her eyes open.

Suddenly a low menacing growl from Pincher made her start. She trembled—she knew not why.

A sweet, delicious joy, vague and nameless, had taken swift possession of her soul.

"Do not move," spoke a well-remembered voice somewhere quite near—"do not move, I beseech you! As you now are, in that careless day-dreaming attitude, you are lovely—you are perfect! Do not stir, for the world!"

But Ivy did stir with a vengeance. She looked upward and about her hurriedly. How indeed could she help it!

Standing there upon the downs in the sunlight, just over the furze-grown entrance of her bower, sketch-book in hand, was Ronald Dundas!

Ivy could never quite recall afterwards how it all came about—because for minutes her confusion and surprise were once more overwhelming at again so unexpectedly beholding Mr. Dundas—but ere long he was lying indolently upon the turf at her side, and, having put away his pencil and sketch-book, was trifling with the pages of the novel in her hand.

"Good little maid!" said he quizzically. "*The Heir of Redclyffe*. May I never find you reading anything worse!"

As for Ivy, she was dumb; the power of speech had fled; and she had intended to be so distant, so indignant with him for causing the injury to Pincher's fore-paw.

But then—but then, she was reflecting insensibly, Pincher was now as good as well; and doubtless Mr. Dundas had never really meant to hurt him. At the worst, it was an accident. And so Ivy was mute.

And besides, too, in her heart, she was so very glad to meet him once again!

And there all the while he was explaining to her quite simply and naturally the reason of his absence from Breezy Point, and how it was that lately she had not seen him at his sketching out of doors.

He said that he had been called by telegram suddenly to Scotland; and had started forthwith for the north with scarcely five minutes' preparation.

Then unforeseen delays here and there had cropped up, and he had stayed away much longer than he had anticipated at first. After having travelled all night he had got back to Breezy Point only on the morning of that very day.

"I had half a mind on my journey," said he, looking searchingly at Ivy as he spoke, "to write you just a word or two, explaining my absence from these beautiful southern wilds. Afterwards I remembered that I did not know your proper address—I fancied, too, that you might not like me to write; yet to me it seemed rude and unkind, somehow, not to do so. By the way," said Ronald Dundas earnestly, "how ought one, in writing to you, Miss Ivy Moss, to address you at that dull and lonely old house of yours in the hollow down yonder?"

"I hardly know," she answered timidly then, venturing for the first time to meet the ardent gaze of those dark, clear, red-brown eyes of his. "But I should imagine that 'Dell Cottage, near Bleakferry' would be enough. You see, I never have had a letter in my life."

"Never!"

He did not utter the word in any astonishment; on the contrary, his tone just then was exceedingly thoughtful.

"Never," echoed Ivy quietly.

"Ah!" Mr. Dundas sprang upward so impetuously, to seat himself by Ivy's side upon the grassy hillock which formed her resting-place, that Pincher, who was not many yards away, flew at him immediately, with white teeth ominously bared.

"Be quiet this instant! Lie down, sir!" cried Ivy, in accents of reproof; for how should she know that the dog's instinct was surer than her own? And Pincher, with a growl of smothered dissatisfaction, obeyed his mistress reluctantly.

"The wiry little chap seems to have taken a dislike to me," observed Mr. Dundas airily. Then added more seriously—"I was about to ask whether you would mind telling me something—anything—with reference to yourself and the lonely life you live here! As yet I know so little about you; and I want to know more. Let us talk

about yourself, will you? Believe me, I have grave reasons for asking you—it is not mere impertinent curiosity. The truth is, I am deeply interested in you—May I call you 'Ivy'?" he entreated, breaking off softly.

She blushed a burning, lovely red. Little enough in those days sufficed to make Ivy blush.

"Would it be—would it be right? I am afraid not," she stammered.

"Where would be the harm?" he returned confidently, with a smile. "And it is such a pretty name."

"Do you really like it?" she faltered.

"I never in my life heard a prettier or a sweeter. Indeed," said Ronald Dundas, knitting his dark straight brows, "I recollect now that it is once, years ago, belonged to a dear little cousin of mine; a cousin, however, whom I never saw; for she died before I came to England, in an unusually terrible way. Yes, it is a charming name, Ivy, and suits you, I think, as no other could."

She drew a deep breath—and was conscious of a delicious tremor in every vein. She was very happy—ah, strangely, blindly happy—on that perfect summer afternoon.

And before she was half-an-hour older Ivy had told to Mr. Dundas everything that she could remember of her own simple life—her simple, uneventful life of nineteen years.

How she could recall to memory no other existence than the one she had always lived with her grand-parents at Dell Cottage—in spring, summer, autumn, and in winter—ever the same; an undisturbed record of level monotony from the end of one year to that of another.

How she had never been to school, knowing only what her grandfather, in leisure moments, had taught her; could not play and sing like the short stout Miss Burdens at Breezy Point—in brief, could just read, write, and cipher tolerably, and there was Ivy's education, as it were, in a nutshell.

She told Mr. Dundas about her grandfather's frequent absences from home, and how sorely he was missed at such times by herself and her grandmother. And she told him what a useful little income they made out of the vegetable garden and the small farmyard. Also she volunteered the rather curious information that she and the grandmother never went to church, rarely, indeed, into Bleakferry at all, because the townspeople there always stared at them so!

Ronald Dundas smiled to himself significantly.

"And you are quite sure," he said slowly, at last, pulling thoughtfully at one end of his heavy swart moustache, "that your name, Ivy, is Moss. Really and truly 'Ivy Moss'?"

She stared at him rather breathlessly, open-eyed at the question.

What a singular thing for him to ask, thought she!

## CHAPTER IV.

### A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

"Of course," answered Ivy, when she had conquered her surprise, "of course my real name is Ivy Moss! Why, Mr. Dundas, what else should it be?"

"In that case, Ivy," he rejoined, answering her indirectly, "your own father must have been a son of Daniel and Mrs. Moss!"

"I—I suppose so," she said, with a troubled air. "But I have never heard; I have never inquired."

"And your mother, Ivy," continued Ronald Dundas, gently—"do you remember nothing of her, either?"

"Nothing," she answered him sadly; "nothing, Mr. Dundas—not even in the faintest degree. I have never thought about it until this moment."

How strange, indeed, it was, she thought, that he should have fallen to speculating as to whether or not, in reality, she was the grandchild of Daniel Moss!

"Ivy," he went on, after a pause, with a kind of tender authority in his voice and in his manner, "we must talk more of this, if you do not mind—I mean, about yourself, dear, and the parents you have never known. As I said a



minute ago, I am interested in you—interested in you deeply. You must learn to trust me, Ivy."

She was silent, feeling troubled more and more. What could he mean? Was not she content to be the grandchild of Daniel Dundas? Surely she wanted to be the grandchild of no one else!

"And you do trust me, Ivy!" said Mr. Dundas earnestly, taking her hand into his own, "don't you!"

"Yes; I trust you," she answered, simply—perhaps a little sorrowfully also.

His firm clasp tightened around her fingers. "Your—your grandfather is away, I know," he said, more rapidly; "the Burden people told me. So could not you, during his absence, Ivy, persuade your grandmother to invite me to Dell Cottage?"

Ivy shook her head wistfully.

"I should so much like to see the interior of that grim-looking old, gray abode of yours," said Ronald Dundas. "Tell the old lady that I am a painter, and your friend, roving the south-west of England in search of the picturesque."

Here, recollecting her grandmother's unflattering opinion of all young men, Ivy was obliged to laugh a little.

"What amuses you?" smiled he.

"That funny idea of yours about getting my grandmother to invite you into the house," Ivy said. "Ah, you do not know her!"

"You believe, then, that it would be utterly vain to ask her such a thing?"

"I am convinced that it would. Now my grandfather himself, if he were at home—might—I do not know—"

Mr. Dundas shook his head, frowning thoughtfully.

"No, no, no," he muttered, more to himself than to Ivy. "It must be done, and done promptly, if done at all, before his return to the Cottage."

Ivy glanced wonderingly at her companion, now falling wholly to comprehend the drift of his meaning.

"When will your—your grandfather—the old man, come back to Dell Cottage?" he inquired abruptly. "Ivy, can you tell me that?"

She explained to him that her grandfather had set out only yesterday, and that in all probability he would return to them in about a week's time or so.

He would not be absent longer.

"Ah," said Ronald quickly—"we have a clear whole week, then!"

"Once," said Ivy dreamily, "once, I remember, he was gone for years—for seven whole years! I was only a child at the time, a little child, but I remember it all perfectly. Oh, how dreary it was without him!"

The dark eyes of Ronald Dundas shone suddenly with passionate feeling and conviction; the red-brown light in them seemed to glow triumphantly.

Ivy felt his strong arm touching her waist gently; his searching eloquent gaze thrilled her through and through.

"If you will not invite me to the house, Ivy, you must meet me out here again upon the downs as early as possible," he whispered, half sternly, half playfully. "I have more I wish to say to you; and it shall be said. You trust me; you have confessed it; and—and, well, you must obey me!"

"At all events, I must go now," she faltered—"I must indeed."

And, speaking, she rose from her hillock, feeling in truth rather dizzy with excitement.

Actually the fast-westering sun was already dropping to the fringe of the downs; the glorious turf undulations and gleaming chalk-pits were taking transient rainbow hues beneath the low-spreading fiery light.

The solemn rooks, in dusky battalions, were travelling homeward slowly to the woods beyond Bleakferry.

But, as Ronald Dundas still held her hand, Ivy was unable to make a start.

"Ivy," said he masterfully, "you will see me to-morrow! Promise me now, or I shall not release you."

"I—I promise," she whispered.

"And now, Ivy, you must grant me something else."

"What is that?"

"Something very simple—a kiss."

"You have—you have possession of my hand, Mr. Dundas," she answered tremulously. "If you like—you—you may kiss that."

"I do not like. It is not enough," he said coolly.

And without further preamble or ado, he lifted his hat, bent quickly downward, and then and there kissed her upon the lips.

"My sweet Ivy, I love thee!" he said.

Her hand was free. She turned from him and fled—Pincher, racing on ahead of her, yapping joyously at space.

Her cheeks and throat and brow, she knew, were scarlet. Her eyes were tingling with unshed tears.

Yet, for all that, the heart within her was feather-light, and she laughed for very gladness as she ran.

Away with all anxiety, all fear and misgiving! On their side of the dim gray distant sea, at least, Ivy felt that she was the happiest being alive!

He loved her—how sweet a thing it was to know!

"Your ramble, I should say, has done you good, Ivy," the grandmother observed, when, flushed and glad and just in time for tea, Ivy got back to Dell Cottage. "You certainly look better than you did this morning."

Ivy answered brightly—"I never was ill, granny."

Sunset faded into twilight, twilight died into night. The white summer moon sailed high over the downs, and turned into fairy silver the dew upon heather and gorse.

No sound ever so faintly came up to-night from the dim far-off valley Bleakferry way; all nature seemed hushed and resting beneath the light of the clear summer moon.

Not without uneasiness, as bed-time drew near, did Ivy notice that the grandmother looked gray and drawn about the lips, restless and strange about the eyes—sure signs, as the girl was uncomfortably aware, that the old woman was threatened with a nervous attack.

As they ascended the worn dark stairway together, half frightened at their own shadows, one of the cocks in the hen house began to crow lustily.

As everybody knows, for a cock to crow after sunset, more particularly at night, is by no means an ordinary occurrence.

To superstitious people, indeed, the sound is always an uncanny one; and the harsh voice of the bird calling out in the dark and still hours before midnight is by some said to bode no good.

"There, child," shivered the old woman, her long, rat-like teeth chattering as she turned her gray twitching face towards Ivy, "that means misfortune!"

"Oh! nonsense, granny," said Ivy bravely, though a chill seemed to go straight into her heart.

"And—and perhaps death!" shuddered the dreadful old woman, her voice scarcely audible. "There he goes again! Drat him. I wish I could wring his neck."

"Wring it to-morrow," said Ivy, a little impatiently, "only, to-night, do not try to frighten me out of my wits, please. You will make me as nervous as yourself, granny."

"How can I help my infirmity?" returned the old woman. "I wish I could. You don't know, girl, how I've been tried all the many long and dreadful years that I've lived in this house—"

"Ivy," said the grandmother, checking herself with a kind of jump, as if for the moment she had fancied that the old man, her mate, was behind her—"Ivy, would you mind just creeping out with the mop, or the copper-stick, or something, and knocking him off the perch? I'll wait here for you at the top of the stairs."

"Yes, I should very much mind," Ivy answered quickly. "For goodness sake, granny, do not be so ridiculous! Draw the bedclothes well over your head, and then perhaps you will not hear him."

The girl, at the grandmother's request, remained in the room whilst she undressed and got into bed; and when Ivy turned to go the old woman said, looking up at the low cracked ceiling,—

"When I'm lying awake and can't sleep, I often think how easily anybody could crawl up upon the roof just at this part of the house where it slants so—first by mounting the wall of the cowshed, then along the brew-house tiles, and then on by the help of the spouting to—"

"Pray, do not encourage those horrid fancies at this time of night," Ivy interrupted earnestly.

"Try to sleep, granny, and forget them."

The girl reached her own room thankfully enough. Out in the hen-house, at intervals, the cock continued to crow, doubtless mistaking the chill, white moonlight for a ghostly dawn.

Ivy, looking out of her lattice window, turned her eyes, with innocent love in them, towards the farm-house at Brexey Point.

"Ronald—dear love," she murmured, knowing that no one could hear her, "good-night!"

Was she dreaming—or was she awake?

It must have been past midnight, for the waning moonlight lay in patches on the floor of the room, when Ivy started up in bed, listening acutely, convinced that some unusual noise had reached her sense of hearing.

By degrees it had aroused her sleep-bound faculties, and she was now almost completely awake.

At first she believed that she must beyond all question be dreaming—dreaming that thieves and cut-throats were perhaps upon the roof, the grandmother's uncomfortable talk recurring hazily to Ivy's memory—for the ceiling over head was jarring in a peculiar manner, as if some one, stealthily yet heavily, was moving about within the dark void of the roof itself.

Ivy for a while was horribly frightened; and the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet grew moist with terror.

But the next minute she was out of bed; hastily clad in her gown and a wrap, and with slippers on her bare feet, vainly groping for a match box, which, of course, in a moment of panic, was nowhere to be found.

She had rushed to the conclusion that the old woman was ill, and moving about the house. Perhaps she was in want of assistance, and could not make Ivy hear.

But what on earth could the grandmother be doing all alone in the old man's den and workshop overhead? For now that Ivy was thoroughly awake, and with wits alert, she knew that the strange sounds proceeded from the solitary and mysterious roof-chamber of the house, across the threshold of which she had never once stepped.

Abandoning in despair her search for the matches, Ivy opened her own door, swiftly and noiselessly, and peeped cautiously out into the passage.

If the grandmother should be prowling about in her sleep—and it was not impossible—one could not be too careful, Ivy knew, in one's movements of approaching her.

The white moonbeams pouring in at the small stairhead window flooded the passage and the landing. There it was as light as day; but with a light more cold and "creepy" than that of any day.

Stealing along the passage, with her heart thumping audibly, Ivy came, almost before she was aware of it, upon the door of her grandmother's chamber.

Kind Heaven protect her! Ivy was wrong!

The grandmother's door was shut; and listening at the keyhole, the girl could hear the old woman, evidently in a deep sleep, snoring aloud in her bed.

Then it was not she, either well or ill, who was creeping about the house at this unearthly hour! Who then could it be?

Assuredly someone or something was moving in the gullet under the slates!

Was it a robber?

Had the grandfather returned without warning, and much earlier than he had anticipated?

And if so, how had he managed to get into the

house in spite of shuttered windows and barred doors!

Why, moreover—and this to Ivy was the strangest circumstance of all—why had not Pincher barked, as he never failed to do after nightfall at the slightest noise in the vicinity of Dell Cottage?

Had Pincher growled and barked in that familiar unappreciable way of his, Ivy was certain that she would have heard him directly, his bark in the yard being so near her window.

What ought she to do?

Worse than folly would it be to disturb the sleeping old woman. She would be taken instantly with her nervous "infirmity" in its most distressing and appalling form; and perhaps in the sudden terror of it all would die outright!

On the other hand, inactivity on Ivy's part—and the moments were flying—might mean a violent death both for herself and her grandmother; two weak women, as they were, shut up with some desperate wretch in a lonely dwelling like Dell Cottage.

"Wh—ir—rrr!" went the old eight-day clock in the kitchen down-tubs, and then struck one, jarring hideously upon the dead night silence. And in the same instant Ivy heard a key grate rustily in the garret door; the door itself open gently—close—and then a footstep upon the upper stairway about to descend to the landing where she was.

Dumb, paralyzed with fright, Ivy fell back against the passage-wall, her arms extended behind her, her eyes wide, strained, unwillingly fascinated, fixed upon the dusky narrow stair-ladder which led up to the unknown roof-chamber.

Had her life depended upon promptitude in flight, Ivy, just then, could have stirred neither hand nor foot.

Then dimly she perceived descending towards her the tall figure of a man—descending, advancing, with great care, and, like a blind man, feeling his way as he came.

Soon from the misty shadow he stepped into the clear white moonlight.

A stifled shriek, partly of intense relief, partly of mingled wonderment and joy, broke from the dry parched lips of Ivy then.

The voiceless agony of dread left her straight-way, and Ivy thanked Heaven aloud.

For the man was Ronald Dundas!

(To be continued.)

## IN A MOMENT OF MADNESS.

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(Continued from page 513.)

"For withholding from you my confidence, I never intended to deceive you; but I dare not tell anyone, because I was afraid of my father discovering our secret."

"He will be very angry."

"Not when I am gone. He will soon forgive me. Yes, it is quite true. Percy and I were married this morning, and in two days I leave England with my husband. You will not betray me, Leah?"

"What would be the good?" wearily. "You are married now. Nothing can part you."

"No, nothing but death."

As she spoke she moved towards the table where stood the poisoned coffee still untouched.

Nothing but death!

"Coffee! Is it for me?"—taking the cup in her hand. "I'm just perished with cold. May I have it?"

Nothing but death could part them. Why should she be the one to die—to leave her to happiness and to him?

The thought flashed through Leah's distracted brain with the rapidity of lightning—the next instant she had recoiled from it with a feeling of unutterable horror.

She started forward and laid a detaining hand forcibly on the girl's uplifted arm.

"Ethel, you must not drink that coffee!"

"Why not?" pushing her aside with playful perversity. "I'll ring for some more for you; so here goes!"

She drained the cup to the dregs, then turned her laughing face upon the horrified girl with a wondering look of surprise deepening in her wide open blue eyes.

"Why, what's the matter, Leah? Why do you look at me so strangely?"

"Oh, Ethel! that coffee! Why did you drink it! What shall I do?" wringing her hands in the greatest distress. "There was poison in it!"

"Poison!" The girl repeated the word—that most terrible word in the English language—as if she did not comprehend its meaning. Then she laughed hysterically.

"What nonsense you are talking, Leah! What does she mean, Sarah!" for at that exciting moment the old housekeeper had suddenly and noiselessly appeared before them. "Do you know if there was anything wrong with the coffee? Miss Casella says that it was poisoned."

"It was; but she herself put the poison in it," returned the woman in slow, distinct accents. "She was jealous of you, and now she has done for you at last, Miss Ethel."

"It can't be true!" glancing wildly, imploringly from one to the other. "Leah, why don't you speak—why don't you tell me that it is not true? You would not—you could not do it! Oh! awful thought! To be poisoned on my wedding day!"

Every vestige of colour left the girl's face; she put her hand to her throat as if she were choking, then the frail form awayed sideways, and she fell forward, silent and insensible, at Leah's feet.

"Now is your time—go—fly for your life!" cried Sarah, pushing the dazed, unhappy young actress from the room. "You cannot stay here. You must go, and never return if you don't want to suffer for that poor girl's death—to be accused of murder—to be hung by the neck till you are dead!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

OUTSIDE the snow was falling in soft, light, feathery flakes, whitening the housetops and chilling the air, merging imperceptibly into the deep white carpet that already covered the earth.

Headless of the strengthening storm, of the slippery frozen pavements, of the motley crowd of foot passengers that glanced curiously at her pale, sorrowful face, Leah Casella sped swiftly on through the brilliantly lighted streets, the fear of pursuit giving wings to her feet.

Her eyes are full of a haggard dread, her heart is beating tremulously; she shivers as the biting cold penetrates the thin cloak which Sarah had thrown round her trembling, shivering form, while she paused in the shadow of the doorway, not knowing where to go, whither to turn, or how to undo the harm that had been done.

Out now in a lonelier part of the city. Less light here, and less fear of being recognized and discovered. The stars, calm and clear, shine down upon her with unmoved serenity, so different from the world of darkness—the perturbation—the agonizing thoughts that agitate the fugitive's breast.

Above the eastern horizon, the moon, half hidden behind the sombre clouds, flashes glimpses of light upon the Cathedral and its surrounding heights, dimly discernible against the leaden sky.

And so, panting and weary, through the snow clad streets, facing the biting wind, mingling with the pitiless crowd, the miserable girl hastens breathlessly on, glancing neither to the right nor the left, plodding through the trampled snow, pursued by one awful thought—the memory of those terrible words that had fallen like a signal knell of danger from the lips of the woman who had counselled flight—to be accused of murder! —to be hung by the neck till dead!

Another moment and she pauses irresolutely in the centre of a crowded crossing, her progress

unavoidably delayed by the intricate labyrinth of vehicles.

Blinded, dazed with the dazzling snow, she turns to retrace her steps, to extricate herself from her dangerous position; but the ground is like ice there, her foot slips—there is a shout—a piercing scream from a woman, an oath from a startled cabby, and Leah Casella's apparently inanimate form is dragged, bleeding and senseless, from under a horse's hoof.

"How is your patient now, sister Alice?"

Whose voice was that? Where was she? What had happened?

Leah had woken to life and consciousness to find herself lying in a strange bed in a strange place.

At first her thoughts were vague and fragmentary. She had no memory of her accident, she did not know that she had been taken to a hospital—that by one of those strange coincidences that do sometimes occur to bring together long absent friends, Doctor Esdaile, while taking duty for a fellow-surgeon had found her there, and that it was he with fingers deft and gentle who was quickly removing the bandage on her wounded arm.

Where had she seen that face before? She lifted her uninjured hand to her head and closed her eyes in an effort to tax her memory.

But the next instant she opened them with a look of acute suffering, and a little cry of pain was wrung from her.

"Did I hurt you?" What exquisite sympathy was in the deep, familiar voice! "There!"—moving her arm into a more comfortable position, "if you lie quite still like that, you will not feel the pain."

She murmurs her thanks and glances up at him gratefully, then as their eyes meet, a ray of recognition flashes into hers.

"Doctor Esdaile!"

"You know me?"

"Yes. Have I been long ill? Is this a hospital?" looking round with wondering eyes.

"Yes, don't you remember? You slipped in front of a hansom cab horse and were nearly run over but escaped with a broken arm. You might have been killed. Thank Heaven it was no worse!" he said, and the thrill of passionate feeling in his voice made Leah open her wide dark eyes in surprise.

"Ah, yes, I remember, I was trying to cross a crowded corner where all the 'buses meet, and I got frightened and tried to turn back, and then I fell. Oh! I shall never forget that moment. It was terrible!"

She lay quite still, thinking of the awful experience through which she had passed, then as the haze of her mind somewhat cleared, other thoughts came back to her, and she shuddered as she thought of the cause of her flight.

"Does anyone know that I am here?" at length she asked, turning her head with a feverish movement towards the doctor.

"Your friends have been written to, I think. There was an address found upon you when you were brought here."

"I was only going there for the night," she replied. "I have no friends."

"Don't say that," with one of his grave tender smiles. "You have me."

"Are you my friend?"

"I wish to be. I will be if you will give me the opportunity of proving my friendship."

She looked at him earnestly, and there came the light of sudden hope into her eyes.

"Do you mean that? Will you really help me?"

"I will if you will tell me how." Then as she did not immediately reply, he asked, gently, "Are you in trouble, Miss Casella?"

"In great trouble and danger. I have left my friends and wish to leave England at once. I cannot tell you more. Will you help me to get away, Doctor Esdaile—to procure an engagement abroad?"

To leave England! The news fell upon his ears with an indefinable sense of pain and regret. For ever since he had seen Leah at Westmoor where he had been practising as a *locum tenens* at the time of her mother's death, he had been haunted by the memory of her pale lovely face, he



sweet voice, those dark sorrowful eyes which had met his so frankly and sadly as he bade good-bye to her at Crossbar Lodge.

And now must he lose her again? Could he let her go! The thought was most unwelcome to him.

Then suddenly—like a ray of sunshine penetrating a dusky sky—there flashed across his troubled brain the remembrance of a plan of action which he had been meditating for several weeks. His brow cleared, and he heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Yes, I think I can manage it," he spoke more to himself than to her. "I must see my sister first. She lives with me, you know. I will bring her here to-morrow and introduce her to you. Perhaps you will be able to return with us, although of course it will be some time before your arm is all right again. But at any rate, you can stay with us till you are quite recovered, then we will help you to leave England—if you still wish it."

"Oh! how good and kind you are!" she cried in a tone of intense relief and gratitude. "How can I thank you!"

He did not reply, but pressed her hand with a smile, then the nurse came up to the bedside, and the doctor again bade adieu to his patient and went away; and as he walked slowly and thoughtfully to the nearest railway terminus he found himself recalling every expression of that changeless face, every tone of her sweet, plaintive voice, and wondering what that trouble was that compelled this young and beautiful girl to seek safety in flight from her native country.

Of one thing he felt certain, that whatever her secret sorrow was, it had not arisen through any fault of hers.

He met his sister Emily and his little daughter Lollie just returning from a walk as he reached home.

Miss Edaile was a pretty woman about thirty, and in consequence a finished coquette of some years and experience. She was, however, a good housekeeper, and had taken sole charge of the doctor's one little child who had been left motherless when only six weeks old by the death of his young wife.

Lollie looked like a beautiful doll in her short, pleated frock and pretty Dutch bonnet of red satin and fur. She was a delicate flower, and her health since her infancy had caused her father no little anxiety.

"I think I will take Lollie abroad for the winter," he said, following out that train of thoughts which his recent conversation with Miss Casella had suggested.

"What do you say, Emily, to a tour to Rome?"

"I should love it!" she returned, effusively. "But don't you think the child is old enough to commence her studies. She ought to have a governess," added Emily, unconsciously playing into her brother's hands.

"Just what I have been thinking," was the ready response. "I know a young lady who I feel certain would be only too glad to accept the position of companion governess to Lollie. Do you remember that Leah Casella I told you about—Mr. Langton's stepdaughter—who unconsciously attended her mother's funeral when I was down at Westmoor?"

"Ah, yes, poor thing! I recollect. Where is she now?"

"In the hospital. I have seen her to-day. She fell and injured her arm while crossing a crowded street. She tells me she is quite helpless and friendless, and beseeched me to help her. Fancy a pretty girl like that poor and alone in London!"

"I thought she was a singer or something of that kind—in training for the stage?"

"So she has been, I believe; but perhaps she has not been successful. You know there are so many difficulties in the way of success even for a genius, and there are very few people who are gifted with anything more than ordinary talent."

"From what she said," continued the doctor, with ingenious diplomacy, "I imagined that it would not be difficult to obtain her consent to accompany us abroad. And I promised that you

would help her and see her to-morrow—will you, Emily?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," was the good-humoured reply, and yielding to her brother's importunities, Miss Edaile lost no time in paying a visit to the hospital and unfolding her plans to Leah, who gladly consented to all their arrangements, and was soon conveyed to the doctor's house.

But although she was deeply grateful for this temporary seclusion from the world, and for all the care and tenderness Miss Edaile and her brother bestowed upon her during her convalescence, until they were out of England, she felt that she could not consider herself safe from pursuit, and was haunted by the constant fear of discovery.

She dearly loved her little pupil, and the child at once became attached to her, and would sit in the gloaming with her governess in the room appropriated to their use with her soft arms affectionately entwined round Leah's neck, gazing with low and subdued whispers at the distant lights and deepening clouds of night, as though she unconsciously allowed herself to fall in with Miss Casella's pensive moods.

One day, about a fortnight after she had become an inmate of the doctor's house, Leah was walking alone in the garden which skirted the western side of the dwelling, when she became conscious of the figure of a woman leaning over the gate that afforded a side entrance to the back of the house, and she at once recognised the florid face and portly form of Sarah Simmons.

She started as if she had seen a ghost.

"You here!" she exclaimed in dismay. "What do you want? How did you find me out?"

"Easily enough," returned the other with a disagreeable expressive wink of her left eye. "The hospital folks had written to the address I gave you. My aunt told me that you had had an accident. I went to the hospital, found you had been carried off by the doctor. The doctor's address was soon forthcoming. I returned to my aunt's—sent your luggage on here, which I had smuggled out of Hawthorn-place at twelve o'clock at night, and then as soon as convenient I present myself before your ladyship to claim my reward."

The woman's manner was insolent and familiar.

Leah stared at her in surprise.

"What reward do you want? You have kept back most of my clothes and all my jewels. Surely they will recompense you for anything you have done for me!"

"A few trinkets that scarcely realised £10! Did anybody ever hear anything so ungrateful!" scornfully appealing to some imaginary auditor. "So that's all the thanks I get for aiding and abetting you to evade the just course of the law."

Leah shuddered.

"Was she dead?" she asked, in an awed whisper.

"Dead as a door-nail, and you may thank your stars that you are not taking your trial for her murder. If it had not been for me, who helped you to clear out of the way just in time, you might have been in jail at this present moment."

Again Leah shuddered, and the look of sorrow deepened in her dark, fathomless eyes.

"Oh, hush, hush! Why will you persist in assuming that I intended the chloral for her? I was very miserable, very unhappy, and meant to take it myself, to make me sleep."

The woman laughed sardonically.

"Oh, I believe that little story, in course I do," sarcastically. "It sounds so very likely. Didn't I see you put the poison in the coffee just before Miss Ethel came in? Didn't I know that you were watching them from the window in the dark, and were as jealous as any woman could be of the poor young lady and her sweetheart? Anyone could see that for weeks before. Yes, Miss Casella, if I were in the witness-box, my evidence would go hard against you. I hope you know that, and that I'm not going to keep silent unless you pay me well to hold my tongue."

She finished this callous speech with one of her coarse, discordant laughs that caused Leah to

tremble, and give an affrighted backward glance towards the house.

Oh, if anyone should see them together and overhear what she was saying!

It would be useless, she felt, to deny the woman's charges—to refute her accusations.

What could she do? How explain her presence there?

Was there no way out of all this sorrow and trouble, no way of ridding herself of her cruel tormentor?

There was no escape.

She was at her mercy.

"Why do you come here to torture me?" she cried, turning her mournful eyes full of a passionate anguish upon her accuser's hardened countenance. "Why will you not leave me in peace? I tell you I am not guilty of Ethel Warhurst's death. You will not believe me. What, then, do you want with me?"

"What should I want but money?" returned the woman, sullenly. "Give me £200, then I will promise to do you no harm, nor molest you in any way, and you shall never see or hear from me again."

"Two hundred pounds! It is impossible. I haven't got the money."

"Then you will just have to get it somewhere, or pay me by instalments," she answered, coolly. "You have got a good situation here with these people who took you from the hospital, and I have no doubt you will have a big salary. As for me, I'm making nothing now. I've left Hawthorn-place, and am living with my aunt. I am tired of service, and don't mean to take another situation, so I'll just have to live on hush-money, and the sooner you begin paying your debts the better for me. Can't you give me a few pounds to start with to-day?" she asked, holding out a large, flabby hand. "I'm terribly hard up, so is my aunt, and I can get no credit there."

"I will give you all I have here," replied Leah, taking out her purse. "And now go, leave me in peace for a little while, and as soon as I have more you shall have it. Don't come here again, we are going abroad soon, so anything I have to give you I can send by post."

"Going abroad!" repeated the other, aghast. "Oh, so that's your little game! You are going to run away from me, are you?"

"Don't be afraid," Leah spoke coldly and contemptuously. "Although I am innocent of the crime of which you accuse me, I have no intention of defying you at present. I know many have been proved guilty through circumstantial evidence, and for that reason I will pay you to keep my whereabouts unknown. I give you my promise, and I shall not break it."

"If you did I'll soon set the detectives after you," was the unfeeling retort. "And now, Miss Casella, I'll say good evening, and if I don't have a letter from you soon, with plenty of the needful, remember it will be the worse for you!"

She shook her closed hand as a parting salute and walked away from the garden gate, and as the unhappy girl watched her ungainly, slouching figure disappear in the distance, an involuntary sigh broke from her lips.

"Why so sad?" said a pleasant voice at her elbow, and turning with a violent start, Leah found herself face to face with Doctor Edaile.

## CHAPTER IX.

SHE coloured hotly as her eyes met his quiet inquiring gaze.

"Who was that woman?" he asked. "What did she want?"

"She came to see me," Leah answered, nervously.

"To see you! I thought, Miss Casella, you said that none of your friends knew that you were still in London!"

"She was not a friend, only an old servant who lived with the people with whom I lodged. She is out of a situation and very poor, and came to ask me to help her," explained the embarrassed girl, feeling very contemptible in her own eyes at having to resort to so much dissimulation.

"Why did you not send her to me? perhaps I could have given her some assistance."

"You are very kind. I did give her something—all that I had in my purse."

"And left yourself poor in consequence. That was very generous of you. Miss Casella," he went on, quickly, making a mighty effort to speak in a business-like tone, "I have been thinking that perhaps you will require an outfit—at all events, you will no doubt wish to make many purchases before you leave England; and I shall be very pleased—indeed I insist that if you are at all short of money you will make me your banker."

"Oh, how kind and thoughtful you are!" she cried, involuntarily. "How can I thank you?"

"Yes," after a little pause, as she remembered Sarah Simmons's demands. "I shall be very pleased if you can give me part of my salary in advance for—say six months, or even three. I may as well confess I have very little money in hand."

"You shall have as much as you wish in advance for a year, two—three years if you like," he replied, impulsively.

His voice had changed and he was fast losing his self-control.

"Let there be no question of salary between us two. I hate the word! Anything—everything I have is at your command!"

He laid his trembling hand on her arm, but Leah, with another vivid blush in which there was now something of anger and resentment, made an instinctive effort to draw herself away from him.

"Doctor Esdaille, why do you say that to me?" flashing a proud inquiring glance at him. "Do you wish to take advantage of my poverty—or my position as your daughter's governess?"

But the next moment she regretted these thoughtless words.

He turned his dark eyes full upon her with a grave look of surprise and reproach.

"So that is your opinion of me? Thank you, Miss Casella," he said, with an unmistakably injured air.

She saw that she had misjudged him, and hastened to apologise.

"I spoke hastily. I ought not to have said such foolish words. Will you forgive me?" she asked, in her irresistible pleading way.

"I could forgive you anything. I could never be angry with you very long," with a reassuring smile. "Perhaps I ought to have been a little more conventional in my speech; but you must know, Miss Casella, that I have a very high respect—a very sincere regard for you."

"You have been to me the best of friends," she retorted, warmly. "But for you and Miss Esdaille I don't know what would have become of me. For now that circumstances have made it impossible for me to continue earning my livelihood on the stage I cannot tell you how grateful I am at having secured an engagement as a governess without all the delay, the difficulties and trouble which so many poor girls have to endure before they obtain employment."

Her sweet plaintive voice ceased, and she waited in silence for the doctor to make some sort of a reply.

But he did not speak. Indeed at that moment it taxed all his powers of self command not to take her in his arms—to tell her that he loved her; that she might never want more; never be friendless, or poor, or alone if she would only give him the right to help her—to keep and shield her from all harm.

But the doctor was not a vain man. He had little confidence in his own attractions, and he feared to drive Leah away from his house by a too hasty declaration of his love before he had taught her to regard him, as he hoped she eventually would, in some other light than that of a benevolent friend.

At this point of the conversation the child Lollie came running towards them, and when they returned to the house with her they found Miss Esdaille dispensing afternoon tea to one or two callers who had arrived in their absence.

Emily was looking her best, for one of the

visitors was an ardent admirer of hers—a certain Captain Grinold, a tall, flaxen-haired man with a decidedly military type of countenance.

He was, however, only a soldier in appearance and name, for he belonged to no particular regiment, and few knew whence he derived his title.

That he was unmarried and possessed of considerable wealth was an undisputed fact, and sufficient guarantee to ensure him invitations to every social gathering given within radius of the locality in which he lived, and at which the feminine element were likely to predominate.

The doctor and his little daughter received an effusive greeting from two marriageable young ladies remarkable for their long, swan-like necks and total lack of good looks; and apparently in the eyes of their mamma, with whom they were accompanied, and who, no doubt, hoped to propitiate the doctor through the darling of his heart, Lollie at once became the centre of attraction.

"Sweet child," said the stout matron, as she lifted the little girl on to her daughter's knee. "How sad to think that she has no mother. Selina, my love, give Lollie some tea. My daughter," she added aside parenthetically to the doctor, "has quite a natural aptitude for waiting upon children. You are very fond of little girls, aren't you, Selina, my dear?"

"Yes, mamma," dutifully replied that stony-faced inanimate-looking young lady. "I simply adore them."

"She pressed her cold, expressionless face against the child's pink and white cheek; but Lollie, evidently resenting so many kisses, or rather with a selfishness typical of human kind, desiring something more substantial, struggled from off the young lady's lap, and trotted to the captain's side.

"Goodies!" she articulated in her lisping baby voice, peering inquiringly into one of his capacious pockets, which had before yielded her many unexpected treasures.

The captain was equal to the occasion. He never forgot Lollie. He plunged his hand into his coat pocket and, much to the child's delight, produced a mysterious-looking paper parcel, the contents of which were soon conveyed to her pretty rosebud mouth.

Most of the visitors having apparently finished tea—it is noticeably a peculiar instance how the presence of an eligible *parti* will suddenly lessen the appetite of some young ladies—Miss Esdaille proposed an adjournment to the conservatory, and after her guests had politely made several deeply-interested inquiries as to the names and well-being of her favourite plants, and had been amicably enlightened on this important subject, they then gradually took their departure, and Emily returned to the drawing-room to find the captain lingering there alone.

"Where is Gerard?" she asked, with well-dissembled surprise. "I thought he was here with you."

"The doctor has gone out, I presume to see a patient. I have been here some time alone. I thought you had quite forgotten my existence, Miss Esdaille," he added, with a reproachful intonation of voice.

"Really I am very sorry."

She flashed an amused glance at him from under her prettily-arched eyebrows.

"I quite thought my brother was entertaining you. But I'm afraid he does not stand much on ceremony with old friends, such as you are. You know I must devote myself to my lady visitors, and must not mind sacrificing my wishes to their enjoyment."

"Is it, then, a sacrifice for you to leave them to talk to me?" purposely misunderstanding her. "If so, then don't let me deprive you of your pleasure. I will go now."

"Indeed, you shall not! All the others have gone, and I have nothing else to do now but to amuse you."

"But if I weary you—if you think me a bore—"

"Really, how persistent you are! Do you want to force me to admit that I prefer to be with you—that I wish you to stay?"

"I would not force you to anything; but if I

could think that, it would make me the happiest of men," he retorted, with impulsive sincerity.

"You may think what you please. I am not the keeper of your thoughts."

"Yes, you are. And of my heart also. Oh, Miss Esdaille, and now be played nervously with his eyeglass, "if only I could make you understand what you are to me! But it would be useless—a waste of words. I don't believe you know what love means."

"Then why don't you take pity on my ignorance, Captain Grinold, and teach me how to love," she said, with a mischievous glance, and another of her vivacious smiles. "But I don't care to hear the theory of such an incomprehensible disease. I think it would be much nicer to learn by experience, though I'm afraid you could not teach me that lesson. You are too—too slow!" she was going to say; but she checked herself, and left the word unsaid.

"Too shy!" concluding the sentence for her. "Yes, I know; that has been my misfortune all through life. But despite your assumed ignorance of such experience, I don't believe anyone has had more practice in heart-breaking than you, Miss Esdaille."

"On the contrary, my heart has had so many attacks made upon it that had it not been very elastic it would have been broken long ago," she retorted, with a little silvery laugh.

"Will you never be serious?" he looked at her pleadingly from under his low straight eyebrows. "Will you not listen patiently while I tell you—again he hesitated, and in desperation bashfully resorted to his eyeglass, which seemed to claim all his attention till his diplomatic companion saying,—

"Don't; it annoys me," smilingly put out her slim white hand, and took the obnoxious article altogether from him.

"Now, what is it you are so very anxious to tell me?" she asked, with provoking coolness and apparent unconcern.

"Only—that I love you."

The momentous words were spoken at last. The captain heaved a sigh of relief, and now ventured to put one disengaged arm round her neatly corseted waist.

"Is that all?" Her words veiled a hidden dissatisfaction. "So many have told me that."

"All!" and now he spoke with passionate eloquence. "Is it nothing to you that you have stolen my heart, made shipwreck of all my hopes, robbed me of my peace of mind night and day! Nothing to you to be offered the whole love of a man's heart—to know that the happiness of my life is ruined unless you promise to be my wife?"

"Do you really wish that?"

She lifted her bright brown eyes to his, beaming with sudden eagerness, and gave him one of those bewitching glances that had so often chained him to her side.

"You know I do. You know that I have always loved you and longed to call you mine. Say that you will try to love me a little, Emily."

He called her by her name, and looked down into her face with such a glow of tender light in his eyes that compelled even that experienced coquette to drop her own in sudden confusion.

"I am your wife if you will marry me," she murmured demurely, quoting the words with coy timidity as she yielded her soft lips to his in their first impassioned kiss of betrothal.

## CHAPTER X.

"ENGAGED to be married! You are joking, Emily!"

"No, I am not. It is quite true. You seem greatly astonished, Gerard. Is it so very wonderful that any one should wish to marry me?"

Miss Esdaille had just told her brother of the change in her prospects, and was feeling not a little offended that he should evince so much surprise at the information.

"As if he thought that I was destined to be an old maid," she said, with the usual feminine prejudice against such a melancholy fate.



"Captain Grinold and I are old sweethearts, and I always intended to marry him—as soon as he asked me," she added, truthfully.

The doctor did not reply. Manlike, he was thinking how this change would affect himself and his own affairs. Emily had lived with him so long, and had been so indispensable in the management of his household, that whenever he had contemplated her probable marriage, it had been with a secret and, perhaps, rather a selfish hope that such an event would never come to pass.

But at the present moment he is not thinking of anything so common-place as domestic matters. His mind is full of Leah Casella, of her expressed desire to leave England, and of their purposed visit to Rome.

"Of course, I don't mean that," at length he says, in answer to Miss Esdail's petulant remark. "I know you might have married long before this if you had so wished; but you have been such a flirt, Emily. I never thought that you could make up your mind to centre your affections upon any particular one. At all events, you have my most sincere wishes for your happiness. When is the important event coming off?"

"Early in the spring, I think," she answers with a becoming blush.

"Then I suppose you can't go abroad with me this winter?"

"I'm afraid not. We"—with a slight hesitation over that little word *we*. "Captain Grinold and I will probably be going to the Continent in the spring; so I suppose you will have to give up the idea, Gerard, or get some elderly person to go with Lollie. Of course you could not take Miss Casella with you unless I were with you."

"No, I suppose not"—with rather a peculiar smile, and something indefinable in his tone which puzzles her and causes her to glance at him keenly. "I will go and tell her of the change in our arrangements."

And then he left his sister and at once proceeded to the schoolroom, where he found the object of his search patiently assisting his little daughter to practice writing her own name.

"Run away, Lollie," he said. "I want to talk to Miss Casella, and I believe cook has some sweeties for you down in the kitchen."

The child delighted throw aside her pencil and scampered off, and the doctor immediately seated himself in the chair she had vacated.

"I have come to tell you that we cannot go abroad this winter," he said, hastening to explain his intrusion. "My sister has become engaged to Captain Grinold, and is to be married in the spring, and, as you know, we could not very well go without her."

A look of disappointment came into Leah's eyes.

She had been so happy with the doctor and his sister, and now the thought of leaving these kind friends troubled her greatly.

"Then I must try to obtain another engagement. I cannot—I dare not stay in England," she said, in a low distressed voice.

"You will leave us?"

"I must. It is a poor return for all your kindness, doctor; but you know I don't go willingly. I would so gladly have remained with you and Miss Esdail; but it cannot be."

"Why not?" bending eagerly towards her. "Whom do you fear? Why must you leave England? I am sure it is through no fault of yours."

"You believe that?" There was a look of earnest entreaty in the depths of those dark wondrous eyes that were lifted appealingly to his.

"Most certainly I do, or I would not have asked you to come here. Nothing shall ever shake my faith in you. I could not believe you guilty of a wicked act, Miss Casella, even if an angel came to testify against you!"

Leah gave an unconscious sigh of relief.

"It is so good of you to say that. I could not bear you to think ill of me. If ever you should hear me accused of—of a crime, you will not believe it, will you?—you will know that I am innocent," she asked, pleadingly.

"Dear Miss Casella," the doctor spoke with suppressed feeling; "have I not given you my promise always to think well of you? Although I know very little of your past, I believe it to have been as pure, as free from blame as the life of a true and beautiful woman like yourself ought to be; and I only wish—"

He paused for a moment failing to find words to express that all absorbing passion with which this serious, dark-eyed girl had inspired him.

"I wish you would tell me what your trouble is; what that secret danger that compels you to absent yourself from all who know and love you. You are now alone in the world, you say; let me be your friend; give me a right to help you—to protect you against all the world!"

He had left his seat and had flung himself on his knee beside her, locking her hand in his.

"Leah," he continued, passionately, holding the girl silent and breathless by this sudden confession; "you don't know how much you are to me. You have never been absent from my thoughts since I met you down at Westmoor—at Crossbar Lodge. I loved you the first moment I saw you. You didn't know it, how should you? You were too unhappy then to think of anything but your great loss. But when you bade good-bye to me, when my eyes met yours; when your hand touched mine, I knew then that I loved you. And now that we have met again; now that you are again in trouble, and there is no one in the whole world to help you—no one who has your interests, your welfare so much at heart as I have, you must not talk of leaving me. I cannot endure the thought of losing you. We will be married, then we shall be independent of Emily, and can go abroad ourselves together, as soon as you wish."

But Leah had now recovered from the surprise this impassioned speech had caused her.

She withdrew from his grasp and, rising from her seat, she resolutely moved towards the door.

"Doctor Esdail, I cannot stay to hear you talk in that strain to me. I am very sorry; please go, or I must leave the schoolroom."

Her words could only bear one interpretation. His heart sank.

"Then you can give me no hope? Oh, Leah, answer me!"

He caught his breath sharply.

"Is there another—anyone else you care for? Is it possible that you have already given your love?"

She shook her head.

No; there was no one else. She had no need to question her heart on that point.

She knew that the wild infatuation she had once felt for Percy Clements had died with the shock of Ethel Warhurst's death, and she shuddered when she thought of that past folly—of that moment of madness when, with the unreasoning impetuosity of youth new to sorrow, she had wished to die.

"Then if you care for no other, will you not try to love me a little, Leah?" he went on, pleadingly. "Think how lonely my life will be without you—how unhappy I shall be. And when you go away from us—out into the world alone, think of the hardships, the discomforts you will have to endure with no one to love you, to make life smooth for you. Oh, Leah, give me the right to call you mine, and I will care for you so tenderly! I will never question your reasons for wishing to leave England. I will go where you like, live where you command, only say that you will not abandon me now; and you may keep your secret, and I will take you to my heart—trust you always, and the world outside shall be as nothing to us!"

He was again by her side and had drawn Leah now unresisting, into his arms. She was carried away by his vehemence, and for a moment passively submitted to his impassioned caresses.

How trusting—how deep was his love! She was so tired, so weary with battling with the anxieties and difficulties of her perilous position, and longed to unburden her heart to him of all its cares—that secret fear and sorrow that embittered her life and haunted her day and night.

And at last she had found a haven of rest—a safe and certain shelter from the world in this

true and noble heart that was being offered to her.

Could she refuse such a precious gift? for precious it was to her—poor and friendless as she felt herself to be—a miserable outcast fleeing from the dread punishment of a crime of which she shrank from endeavouring to prove her innocence.

But how could she with this ban upon her past link her life with his?

Some day she might be discovered and overwhelmed with publicity and disgrace; when he, as her husband, must needs suffer too.

Yes, she would wrong him to consent.

"Better leave me to my fate," she said, as she hid her face with almost a sob. "If you marry me, I shall surely bring trouble upon you, and you will regret the day you made me your wife."

"I will take the risk of that," he said, and the thrill of gladness in his voice spoke volumes. He had conquered and he knew it. "No, dearest, I am not going to let you run away yet—not till everything is finally settled. When are we to be married?"

"Oh, any time!—as soon as you wish," she answered, with an eagerness he was not vain enough to misunderstand. "I am so anxious to get away from England."

"Then shall it be this day fortnight?"

But now she did not reply save by one swift upward glance from beneath the long dark eyelashes, to which the tear-drops clung like glittering dew—one faint pressure of her trembling hand over which his strong fingers were firmly closed; and although she had never said that she loved him, nor that she would be his, yet Gerard Esdail knew that he had won her consent—that Leah Casella was his promised wife, and thought that the greatest of earthly blessings had fallen to his lot.

## CHAPTER XI.

"Who is your correspondent, Leah?"

They had at last reached Rome, and were staying in a suite of apartments which the doctor had engaged for himself, his wife, and Lollie on the *secondo piano* of one of the large hotels.

Her present life was on the whole a happy one to Leah, and she was fast gaining renewed strength and fresh thoughts under the blue Italian sky.

Gerard was the kindest of husbands, and the dark past had almost ceased to haunt her, except when she was unpleasantly reminded of that unhappy time by the receipt of one of those begging epistles which arrived at periodical intervals from her old tormentor, Sarah Simmons.

"The letter is from that old servant I told you about, Gerard," she replied in answer to her husband's query. "It appears she is again in difficulties and asks me to send her a little pecuniary help."

"That woman is a perfect tax upon you, Leah. Why, it's scarcely a fortnight since you sent her five pounds. I must write to her myself and tell her I won't have her annoying my wife with her begging letters. She has no claim upon you. You are too kind, dear, and she knows it, and so imposes on your generosity."

Leah flushed guiltily at his unmerited praise. She struggled with a compunction of conscience, and longed yet dared not tell her husband the truth.

To her frank, straightforward disposition, the thought of that deception she was forced to practise upon him was most repugnant to her.

"Have you had a letter from your uncle, Gerard?" at length she asked, trying to divert his attention from this unwelcome subject. "Has he recovered from his cold?"

"No, he is much worse. He is having one of his old attacks of bronchitis, and Tomkins says—this letter is not from him but from his lawyer—that the doctor gives no hope of his ultimate recovery, and that he thinks I ought to return to England at once."

"Oh, Gerard! must you really go?"

"I'm afraid so if I would see my poor old

uncle alive. But we will go to Venice, and I will leave you and Lollie there and return to you both as soon as I possibly can."

The doctor had made this decision from a sense of duty. The thought of leaving his beautiful young wife so soon after their marriage had caused him infinite regret. But there was no help for it. He knew that Leah did not wish to return to England, and he was at the same time aware that his uncle, Sir Hugh Eadsale, would not be content unless he were with him at the last.

The old baronet had always been greatly attached to his nephew. He had sent him to college, had paid all necessary fees pertaining to his qualification as a physician, and had from the death of his own son acknowledged Gerard as his heir.

So it was decided that they should at once leave Rome, and proceed to Venice, which they did, breaking the journey only at Florence, where they stayed two nights and a day at the "Hotel Cavour."

Before leaving Rome, Leah had not replied to Sarah Simmons' last letter for more reasons than one. In the first place she thought she would wait until they were settled at Venice, when she could give her new address; then, again, she knew that her husband would be certain to leave her an unlimited supply of money for their expenses during his absence, out of which she hoped to save enough to satisfy the woman's demands.

But on the morning fixed for Gerard's departure there arrived another letter from Sarah Simmons, which had been forwarded from Rome.

Leah at once recognised her large sprawling handwriting, and when she saw that the envelope was addressed not to her but to her husband, Dr. Eadsale, her heart almost seemed to stop beating, a deadly faintness came over her, so that she had to clutch the side of her chair for support.

"Is it—for you?" she gasped, but the words were scarcely audible, and she was pale to the lips with fear and anxiety as she watched her husband carelessly turn the letter over, and in a pre-occupied fashion break the seal. The contents read as follows:—

"If you do not wish your wife to be arrested for murder be good enough to send me a cheque for two hundred pounds, made payable to

"Yours truly,

"SARAH SIMMONS.

"P.S.—I have written twice to your wife, but she has taken no sort of notice of my last letter; so I have come to the conclusion that it will pay me better to deal direct with you. She will tell you that my demands are honest.—S. S."

As Gerard ran his eye over these few concise lines the sense of the words seemed to burn into his brain.

He dropped the letter with a gasp of surprise, and turned his astonished gaze upon his shivering wife with a look of anguish and entreaty in his eyes.

"What does she mean! What can she mean!" he cried. "Leah! this woman accuses you of—of murder! It's not true!—oh! tell me that it's not true!"

She calmed herself with a mighty effort to reply.

"As Heaven is my witness," she answered solemnly, "I am as innocent as you are of any crime—of this crime of which she accuses me. Oh! Gerard, I never thought you would have doubted me! You promised to believe in me—to trust me—"

Her voice faltered and broke. She gave one look at the man who stood before her and thought she saw condemnation and repression on every feature of his pale stern face; and then with a little sob of misery she bowed her head on her hand, and woman-like broke into a passion of tears.

Gerard's kind heart was touched. He could not bear to see her weep—to see the woman he loved in such deep sorrow.

"Soon his heart relented  
Towards her, his life so late,  
And sole delight."

He went over to the couch where she had thrown herself in a paroxysm of grief and despair. He knelt down beside her, and taking her hands from the tear-stained face, he held them firmly in his own while he tried to kiss the tears away.

"Leah! you must not distress yourself so. You will be ill, you must not think that I judge you unheard! Try to calm yourself, dear, and tell me about this terrible secret. What cause had that woman to write such a letter to me?"

And so soothing her, Gerard at last managed to draw from his unhappy wife a full account of all her past sorrows; but when she told him of her infatuation for Percy Clements his face grew ghastly, and his eyes were fixed on her with a look of wild entreaty.

"You loved this man so much that you wished to die!" he said, in a low, hoarse voice, recoiling unconsciously from the slender, trembling form that clung almost convulsively to him. "That is why you did not care to marry me. You loved him then—you love him still."

"Oh, no, Gerard, that was not love—it was madness. I—I think my brain was a little turned with the shock of my mother's death. That folly was soon past. It is you I care for now, you only I love."

But he had shaken the touch of her hand from his arm, and rising to his feet he took a few turns up and down the room, his eyes bent moodily upon the carpet.

Suddenly he remembered that he had made arrangements to start for England that morning, and he came back hastily to where she stood in a despondent attitude that seemed to plead for mercy, her bosom heaving, her hands entwined.

"Leah, we must say good-bye now. I must go, or I shall not catch the train."

"You will come back?" she said as a new and terrible fear in some vague and incomprehensible way suddenly seized upon her heart.

"Of course. I will write to you. Good-bye!"

"Say that you forgive me before you go—that you believe I love you," she entreated, imploringly.

"I forgive you freely—if there is anything to forgive," he answered; then, as she did not speak, he kissed her gravely and turned to leave her, and she saw him moving towards the door as if penetrating a cloud.

She listened to the sound of his retreating footsteps till they had died away in the distance, and then, with a gesture of despair, she flung herself again on the couch with her face downwards on its pile of cushions.

What moments of agonising thought she endured during that long weary afternoon which followed her husband's departure none but herself ever knew.

At one time she tortured herself with the conviction that he would never return to her, the next moment she thought bitterly that he believed her guilty of that terrible crime—of murder—that the knowledge of her secret had killed his love, and that his trust in her, his affection for her, could never be rekindled.

And now that he had gone—now that she morbidly imagined that she had lost him for ever, there came a longing, heartrending in its intensity, for one more chance to entreat his forgiveness—to plead for his love, for one look at his face, one word of love and pardon from him who, in that moment of parting, had become so unspeakably dear to her.

Lollie could not understand what ailed her poor "mamma," as she always called her. She tried to rouse her with her childish prattle; but Leah listened abstractedly and responded only in monosyllables to the little girl's ceaseless flow of questions.

She was glad when at last it was her bedtime, and Lollie fell asleep in her little bed in the room overlooking the Canal Grande, with the moonlight creeping through the window till the silvery light fell on the child's flushed cheek and touched her golden hair.

It was one of those exquisite evenings, calm and lovely as only a night in Venice can be.

But a spirit of unrest and loneliness was upon Leah as she stood by her casement window

gazing down thoughtfully at the beautiful scene below.

The canal looked one motionless stream of gleaming light. The spires, the ranges of palaces, the leaden coloured dome of a distant church were sublimely exaggerated against a deep, purpling sky, while now and again across the moonlit water came the sweet refrain of a gondolier's song.

Presently a gondola shot from the grey, shadowy light beyond, and stopped at the steps beneath the window where Leah stood.

She caught her breath sharply and leant eagerly forward.

A man, tall and slimly built, had stepped from the gondola, and was assisting a lady to alight—a strangely familiar figure.

As the latter turned her head, and looked up and smiled, a mist came before Leah's eyes; an awful fear took possession of her.

She sank back in her seat, pale and affrighted, and trembling as if she had seen a ghost.

For those eyes that had encountered hers through the clear mystic light of the moon were the eyes of the woman she had so long believed to be dead, that well-remembered face now upturned to her window—not, however, as she had last seen it, with a look of horror and reproach upon it, but as it had haunted her in her dreams—was the sweet, smiling face of Ethel Warhurst!

## CHAPTER XII.

In a few minutes the spell which had held Leah motionless as if riveted to her chair was broken by the sound of a gentle knock in the outer corridor, then the door of her room was slightly pushed open and a voice which set every fibre of her frame quivering questioned brightly—

"May I come in?"

And the next moment the slim graceful figure of a woman entered and stood beside her, and the face of Ethel Warhurst beamed down upon her with the tenderest compassion in her eyes.

A wave of colour rose to Leah's face, then faded, leaving her whiter than before.

Was she dreaming, or was this really the rival she had so long believed had indirectly through her met her death? Or was it only her spirit come back from the grave to haunt her?

She is speaking, her lips move; but Leah cannot hear what she is saying, her voice sounds a long way off. And then she bends her eyes upon her—those beautiful eyes she had so often seen in her dreams. She would fain close hers to shut them from her sight; but still they are there. She never could blot them from her memory.

And now the woman herself has come back to torment her. Would she never go away! Would she never leave her in peace!

"Have you risen from your grave to curse and haunt me!" at length she gasped, faintly, and then a warm cheek is pressed against hers, and the unreality of her presence vanishes.

"Dearest Leah, don't talk so wildly. It is I—your friend, Ethel, alive and well. Look at me—don't you know me! Did you really think that I was dead!"

"The coffee you drank, Ethel—was poisoned. I thought that it had killed you."

"I suppose Sarah Simmons told you that story. That woman, Leah, was a perfect demon for cunning. She made you believe that I was dead when really I had only fainted with fright, then when she had persuaded you to run away, she vanished herself next day with all your belongings; and although we made every inquiry, we never could hear anything of you or her again. I longed to find you for I knew that you would be suffering agonies of fear and remorse, and it is not very long since I had an inquiry for you published in an English paper; but there came no reply, and I had almost given up all hope of ever seeing you again till to-night, when I saw you through the window. I knew that I could not be mistaken, but Percy laughed when I told him, and said that it was altogether improbable that you could be here at Venice. And it is strange, isn't it? a most wonderful coincidence



that we are both staying at the same hotel, and that we should meet after all in this curious, unexpected way."

"But I cannot understand how it was that the coffee you drank did you no harm," said Leah. "I put half a bottle of chloral into it; but I did not mean it for you—you believe that, Ethel! You know I tried to stop you from drinking it, but you would have it. I had meant to take it myself. I had fallen into a low melancholy state of mind. I was weary of life, and, in a moment of madness, I resolved to die."

"Poor Leah!" Ethel understood the cause of that sorrow that had driven her friend to that act of desperation; but she generously made no allusion to it. "No, I know you did not mean it for me for I have the letter you wrote to Mrs. Warburton. I found it on your table just after you had gone. With all her cunning and sharpness, Sarah had omitted to secure that proof of your innocence. But while you were writing in the next room, she had stolen in on tiptoe, thrown away the poisoned coffee and replaced it by another cup. She told me that after I had recovered consciousness, for after what you had said, I was feeling greatly alarmed and wished to send for a doctor. But she did not tell you this, for she had no doubt suddenly conceived the demoniacal idea of accusing you of having murdered me, and herself benefitting by the deception."

"It was a cruel deception. How needlessly I have suffered! And now through her I have lost my husband; lost his confidence and his love."

And then in answer to Ethel's questioning look of surprise, Leah went on to tell her of her accident, of her meeting with Dr. Esdaille in the hospital, of her subsequent marriage with him and of all that had transpired since that unhappy night, when in fear and trouble she had rushed away from Hawthorn-place, believing Ethel to be dead, and that at her hand her death would be laid.

"I could be happy now," she concluded, "if only I knew that my husband did not think badly of me, did not believe me guilty of what that wicked woman accused me. But I am afraid he will never forgive me for not having told him the truth sooner. I have deceived him. How can he ever trust me or care for me again?"

"What nonsense you talk, Leah. You must not get such morbid fancies into your head. Give me the doctor's address, and I will send Percy to tell him all directly we arrive in London."

"You are leaving Venice?"

"Yes, to-morrow; we did not intend to stay more than one night here on our way home. Our aunts at Westmoor are both dead—Miss Jessica died just six weeks after her sister—and they have left Crossbar Lodge and all their money (except a legacy each for Jessie and me) to Percy; so we are returning to England, and are going to live there."

"How is Jessie?"

"Quite well, I think. I had a letter from her a few days ago, in which she told me that she was engaged to the curate at Westmoor, and that papa had quite forgiven Percy for running off with me—since he inherited his aunt's fortune of course—and is waiting to welcome us home."

"So you see, Leah, I have every prospect of happiness, and I hope, dear, that your future will be as bright as mine promises to be, and that you will soon forget the unhappy past."

"And now I must run away or Percy will be wondering what has become of me; but I will bring him in early in the morning to see you and to say good-bye."

She kissed Leah in her bright, impulsive way, and then vanished from the room as swiftly and as gracefully as she had entered, and Mrs. Esdaille feeling quite worn out after the mental excitement of the last hour, retired to her room; but before she laid her head on her pillow, she knelt down by the bedside of the sleeping child and thanked Heaven that Ethel still lived, and that the one sorrow of her life—the cloud that had even shadowed the serenity of her married

happiness, had at last been lifted from her troubled heart.

Mr. and Mrs. Clements have departed to England; Leah had seen and spoken to Ethel's husband, but at the meeting her pulse beat no faster, none of the old overwhelming confusion that she had once felt in the presence of this man stirred her heart.

She loved him no longer, and as she mentally compared his fair, boyish face to that of her grave, manly husband, she looked back with increasing wonder, surprise, and contrition at her own past folly and mad infatuation.

And now she is waiting for the return of her husband with a smile upon her lips, and an expectant light in her dark, glowing eyes.

She is standing alone in an alcove opening on to the balcony overlooking the canal, watching the shadows creeping over the sparkling waters; the flights of tumbling pigeons, the last gleams of vivid sunset that tinge the palace towers with a rich golden light, when at last he comes; he is again beside her, he holds her hand tenderly in his and all her foolish fears vanish as she meets the look of love and gladness in his grave, serious eyes.

"You received my letter! You expected me to-day then, darling?"

"Yes; I was beginning to think that you were too angry with me to write. Oh, Gerard, I cannot tell you how anxious I have been! I thought you might never return."

"Foolish little woman! Did you think that my love was so easily killed? When my uncle died, I had so many things to see about and arrange that I had no time to write sooner after sending you that telegram announcing his death. But to tell the truth, when I left you I was feeling a little bit injured to think that I was not your first and only love, and I cannot describe to you what my sensations were when my rival that had been called upon me to tell me of the fraud that woman Sarah Simmons had been practising upon you."

"Of course I went to her at once and threatened to have her arrested on the charge of obtaining money under false pretences; but afterwards I decided that it would be better for your sake to let the matter rest. She will not trouble you again nor anyone else long, I fancy, for she seems to be killing herself with drinking. And now, Leah, I have told you all my news, but you have not given me one word of welcome—not even said that you are glad to have me back again."

"Glad!" She lifted her candid eyes to his and Dr. Esdaille—or rather, Sir Gerard Esdaille, for he had inherited his uncle's title—saw in them a new expression—an indefinable something that spoke from her heart and banished for ever all his jealous fears. "I cannot tell you how pleased I feel. I am supremely happy at last."

"So you do really care for me after all!" he whispered, with a deep sigh of relief.

And then he drew her closer to him, and their lips met in the kiss of reconciliation which told Leah that she was still loved and forgiven.

(THE END.)

THERE can be little doubt that the ox was the best earliest employed for the plough. A white bull and a white cow were yoked together to draw the furrow for making the walls of Rome. Greeks and Romans employed oxen in ploughing; as only for sandy soils. When the ploughman had finished his day's labour he turned the instrument upside down, and the oxen went home dragging its tail and handle over the surface of the ground—a scene described by Horace. The yoking together of ox and ass was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and is made the ground of ludicrous comparison by Plautus. Ulysses, when he feigned madness in order to avoid going on the Trojan expedition, plowed with an ox and horse together. In the west of England the custom of yoking oxen to the plough went out at the beginning of this century; a very few old men can remember how, as boys, they were employed with the goad to urge on the oxen; hardly any recall having held the plough to them.

## INTERESTING ITEMS.

—101—

AN African dance consists chiefly of rows of men in line, holding their knobkerries upright in one hand, and slowly lifting each foot alternately as high as possible, and bringing it down flat on the sole with a thump. This is accompanied by a monotonous chant of some eight or ten notes repeated endlessly with the same words. One of these phrases sometimes is to the effect that as they have no corn that year to make beer the white man should give it to them. Another is in praise of the "good old times;" but to judge by the singing, these much-vaunted times must have been lugubrious enough. The women dance in a group by themselves, several of them with their babies tied on their backs, the little things taking the jogs and shakes to which they are subjected with absolute equanimity. Both men and women are dressed in every variety of garment, from a suit of tweeds to a mere little piece of skin hanging from the waist. Brass anklets and bracelets are frequent, and every native carries a snuff-box, either round the neck or waist or stuck in his ear. For this latter position empty cartridge cases are in much request. They are stuck through a slit in the lobe of the ear.

ONE of the many ruins with which Arizona is sprinkled is a mystery which baffles the wisest. It is in the Huachuca mountains, not far from the military reservation, in a north-easterly direction. Nothing is known of its origin, and the wonderful part is the material of which it is constructed. It is about two hundred miles from the ocean, and surrounded on all sides by hills of sand and rocks covered with cacti. There is no water for miles, except the excuses for rivers that run during the rainy season. There is not even the suggestion of water, and yet the house is built of sea-shells laid in a sort of cement. Where were the shells obtained? It does not seem possible that the builder of the house would carry the materials over hundreds of miles of desert when there were plenty of rocks near by that would answer the purpose just as well, even though they were not so unique. The house is built in the shape of the straw huts of the Papago Indians, and is about the same size. There is room inside for five or six persons, but at present nobody occupies it, except perhaps some prospector who uses it for a temporary shelter in cold weather. There are a dozen varieties of shells in the walls, and one over the door is of extraordinary size. There is little doubt that this strange building is as old as the oldest in the Territory.

NEW ZEALAND BIRDS.—The kiwi is a brown night bird, about the size of a guinea fowl, with a long, narrow, curved beak, with which it pierces the ground to satisfy its appetite with worms and grubs. It has fine, long, pointed feathers, of which the Maoris make feather rugs by working them together with flaxen threads. The kakapo resembles a large, bright-green parrot, and is very handsome. The wika, or wood hen, is the most common, and the smallest. The gim, or apteryx, has the least developed wing, and approaches most closely to the now extinct moa, or dinornis, of which there are some fine skeleton specimens in the museums. In addition to the wingless birds there are fifty-nine different land birds, and many more water birds abound on the rocks and islands in the South and West. Penguins exist in multitudes, and our captain told us thousands of them swim away in the summer towards the south pole to feed, whence, in spite of having traversed many leagues, they return so fat that they can hardly stand. When travelling they conform themselves into compact bodies, on the sea, of several hundreds each, and spread themselves out in line at just sufficient distance to enable one group to communicate by a cry with another. This curious and intelligent mode of proceeding was to enable them to search the sea for land and to avoid missing it by a mistaken direction.

## FACETIE.

EVERY man has his share of trouble in this world, but the hod-carrier and the lift-boy have probably the most ups and downs.

"Yes," replied the sweet girl graduate, "I've read every play of Shakespeare's, unless he's written something lately."

MR. GRUBBS: "That new neighbour next door goes singing around the house all day long." Mrs. Grubbs (quietly): "She has no husband."

MISS HASBREEN: "I'm very tired after 'the dance last night.'" Little Ethel: "Yes, you must be. Sister says you held the wall up the whole evening."

A: "I WOULD never marry a widow. They are always looking after Number One." B: "I don't agree with you. It seems to me they are invariably looking after Number Two."

STUDENT: "Won't you give me an idea for an essay?" Professor: "Write about a student who wanted to write an essay, and hadn't any idea."

"You've done very well, haven't you, doctor?" Doctor: "Very well. I can almost afford to tell some of my fashionable patients that there is nothing the matter with them."

"Don't you think that baby looks like his father?" asked the young mother. "Yes," replied the visitor, "but I wouldn't worry; he may out-grow it."

MAUDE: "What is the trouble between Alice and Kate, Ethel?" "Why, you see, Alice asked Kate to tell her just what she thought of her." "Yes!" "Kate told her."

MISS THIN: "Don't you think my new dress is just exquisite? They all say so." Fannie: "Oh, lovely! I think that dressmaker of yours could make a clothes-prop look graceful."

"Does a man learn much from his wife?" he asked of a newly married friend. "I should say he does," replied the friend. "I've been married only six months, and I can sew on buttons first rate."

MRS. CHATTER: "My husband and I never have a discussion before the children. If I see a quarrel coming on we always send them out." Visitor: "I thought I had seen them in the street very often."

JONESY: "I say, Brownie, can you let me have two—?" Brownie (hastily interrupting): "I have not a single farthing, Jonesy." Jonesy: "Two half-sovereigns for a sovereign!" Brownie (heartily): "Certainly, old fellow, with pleasure."

NELL: "It was an awfully exciting wedding! The ceremony was delayed an hour." Bess: "Why, what was the matter?" "The bride punctured her bicycle-tyre a mile from the church, and she had to walk the rest of the way."

"MOTHER," sobbed the young bride, "he is just as mean as he can be." "No, he isn't, dear," said the mother, soothingly. "A man can't really develop all his meanness till he has been married four or five years."

BARTON (calling on his cousin from the country): "Why don't you go and see the sights?" Cousin: "Go out! Do you know I'm paying fifteen shillings a day for this room and want to get my money's worth?"

JACK: "She treated you pretty shabby." Jim: "Yes. She's angry with someone." "With you?" "Oh, no! Not with me." "How do you know?" "Because I'm the one she's venting her feelings on."

A CERTAIN medical man of eminence lately handed to a publisher a Treatise on the Hand, which the worthy bookseller declined, with a shake of the head, saying, "My dear sir, we have too many treatises on our hands already."

MRS. BIZKIT: "My husband never refers to his mother's cooking; he seems perfectly satisfied with mine." Mrs. Cooker: "That's strange, isn't it?" Mrs. Bizkit: "Not to me. You see, his mother used to keep the boarding-house I was stopping at when I married him."

SHE (bored): "No, Mr. Lytely, I can never love you. I honour and respect you. I am sure you would make some other woman a good husband. I—" He: "Well—er—could you—er give me a letter of recommendation to my next place?"

THE burglar turned with an air of malignant triumph. "If you shoot me," he hissed, "you'll wake the baby." There was nothing to do but permit him to load all the silver into a sack and carry it away, leaving the front door open behind him.

"I CAN'T have whistling at the table, Mr. Slocum," said the boarding-house keeper. "I thought you said yesterday you liked to hear a man whistle at his work!" replied the boarder, as he made another ineffectual attempt at cutting his piece of beefsteak.

A YOUNG lady in the suburbs who was planning a lunch party in honour of her guest, Miss A., was asked by the latter to arrange her place at table beside someone who was easy to converse with. "Very well," the hostess replied, absent-mindedly, "I will give you Miss L.; she could talk to a stick."

SYMPATHISING FRIEND: "Why, my dear, what's the matter?" The Mourner: "Oh! oh! oh! My husband's going to South America." Sympathising Friend: "Well, my poor dear, don't cry. It might be worse, you know." The Mourner: "No, it couldn't. I have to go with him!"

DR. BOWLESS: "In the first place, you want to take six or seven meals a day—light ones, you know—instead of eating only three times." Mudge: "That is going to be an awful lot of bother." "And take a glass of whisky straight before each meal." "I guess I can find time to attend to it, somehow."

STUDENT: "I learn that there are cases in which people have had from childhood an uncontrollable desire to eat soap. What is the cause of that?" Learned Professor: "They are victims of sapsomania." Student: "Um—what does sapsomania mean?" Learned Professor: "A desire to eat soap."

MRS. F. (petulantly): "You never kiss me now." Mr. F.: "The idea of a woman of your age wanting to be kissed! One would think you were a girl of eighteen." Mrs. F. (sharply): "What do you know about girls of eighteen?" Mr. F. (with great presence of mind): "Why, my dear, weren't you eighteen once yourself?"

"Come and dine with me to-night, Snobbing-ton!" "Sorry to say I can't, old chappie. Afraid I've got to go and dine with that old fool Lord Boreham, for my sins." "Pray consider yourself excused this evening," said Lord Boreham, from behind his newspaper. "Mr.—I find I don't even know you by sight."

He (trying to get out of it pleasantly): "I'm awfully sorry that I must go to-night, Miss Bessie. What an agreeable two weeks we've had of it! I will go and ask your father—(he was going to say "to harness the horse.") She: "Oh, William, I knew it would come, and I asked you yesterday, so as to save you the trouble; he's more than willing."

A COUNTRY minister remarked to his wife the other Sunday afternoon: "There was a stranger in church this morning." "What did he look like?" asked the wife, who was a woman first and a minister's wife afterwards. "I didn't see him." "Then how did you know there was a stranger there?" "I found a half-sovereign in the contribution-box."

A stout old lady, seeing at one of the railway stations an automatic machine from which, by dropping a penny in the slot, you receive the portrait of a celebrity, carefully reconnoitred it. She dropped the coin in, and wearing her best smile, posed herself in front of the machine for a few seconds, opened the door, and drew out a portrait. Adjusting her spectacles and looking at it, what should meet her astonished gaze but a portrait of a lady acrobat in costume. "Well!" she ejaculated, "so this is me, eh? If I don't speak to the authorities about this my name is not Maria Jenkins!"

"AND then, sir," said an alderman the other day to his neighbour at a civic feast, "we topped up with a gorgeous turkey, a first-class bird—never tasted a juicier—malted in the mouth—crammed with truffles to the eyes. Bouquet is no word for it. Left nothing but the bones." "How many were you?" "Two!" "What—only two?" "Yes, two. Why not? The turkey and myself."

LITTLE GIM (looking over advertising page): "Mamma, why do all these seaside boarding-houses object to children?" Fond Mother: "I'm sure I don't know. Go and see what baby is crying about, and tell Johnny to stop throwing things at people in the street, and make George and Kate stop fighting, and tell Dick if he doesn't stop blowing that tin trumpet I'll take it away from him."

THE crowd was transfixed. "And now," announced the lecturer, "this wonderful woman will close her thrilling entertainment by entering a den of mice who haven't tasted food for a week, feed them with raw meat, and make them do tricks." Not one of the multitude could move, and not an eye was taken from the intrepid performer, until the heart-sickening spectacle was at an end.

"WHAT shall I do?" she moaned. "I have broken my bicycle." "Let me see the wreck," said her mother. "Why, these wheels are very light, indeed!" "Yes, the lightest manufactured." "Well, there is no need of wasting them. I'll take them to the milliner's and have some trimming put on them. They will make lovely hats for you and your sister to wear to the theatre."

He (reading a letter): "Then I take it your mother is coming to-day, dear. Why, we asked Mr. and Mrs. Hyde Parkins to dinner this evening, didn't we?" She: "Yes, love. I'm afraid we shall have to put them off somehow. Mamma can't bear Mr. Hyde Parkins. What on earth shall we say?" He (wearily): "Oh, I think we might postpone their visit on account of 'sudden domestic calamity,' or something of that sort."

A SAILOR having strayed into a show at a fair to have a look at the wild beasts was much struck with the sight of a lion and a tiger in the same den. "Why, Jack," said he to a mesmate who was chewing a quid in silent amazement, "I shouldn't wonder if next year they was to carry about a sailor and a marine living peaceably together." "Ay," said his married companion; "or man and wife."

SCENE.—The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square.—First Visitor (evidently from White-chapel): "I say, Bill, this is a finer lot than them there pictures at the Crystal Palace." Second Visitor: "Yes, and gratis for nothing, too. I wonder how they manage to do it so cheap?" First Visitor: "Lor, bless yer! it don't cost much to run! You can pick up most of these 'ere things second-hand."

"THIS is your little sister, Tommy," said the father, showing him the baby. "You will love her dearly, will you not?" "Y-yes, of course," replied Tommy, inspecting the latest arrival, "but it'll cost a great deal to keep her, won't it?" "I presume so." "Yes," said Tommy, with a long-drawn breath; "and when I asked you the other day to buy me a white rabbit you said you couldn't afford it."

"Mr father," said the small boy to the woman who was calling on his mother, "is a great man. He knows what time it is without even looking at his watch." "What do you mean, Tommy?" asked the visitor. "Oh, when I holler out and ask him what time it is in the morning he always says it's time to get up. And when I ask him what time it is in the evening he always says, 'Time to go to bed.'"

ONE stormy morning, while a party of Scots were crossing from Arran to Ardrossan, one of their number was observed by his companions to be sitting at the side of the boat with a very weebegone expression on his face, and evidently suffering severely from sea-sickness. On seeing this, one of the travellers approached him, and said, kindly: "Are you sick, Geordie?" "Ma goodness," said Geordie, looking up in evident disgust, "d'ye think a'm doing it for fun!"



## SOCIETY.

It is said that the Duke of York is prepped to sell his valuable collection of postage-stamps.

The Grand Duke Serge Alexandrovitch and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, who are staying at Fraasensbad, are coming to England this month, and will be the guests of the Queen at Balmoral for a week or ten days. The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess are to visit the Duke and Duchess of Coburg at Reinhardbrunn, the Empress Frederick at Cronberg, and the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse at Kranichstein, near Darmstadt, during their stay in Germany.

The Queen has invited the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Sergius of Russia to visit her next month at Balmoral.

The Duke and Duchess of Teck will be away until the end of September. The Duke will probably spend October in Germany, while the Duchess is to be then at Sandringham with the Duke and Duchess of York.

The Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha expect the Prince of Wales on a visit to them about the twelfth of this month. They will then be at the Chateau of Reinhardbrunn in the Thuringian Forest, and there are to be some great shooting parties there during the Prince's stay. The sport is splendid, the late Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha having taken endless trouble and gone to great expense to render it what it undoubtedly is—one of the finest sporting estates in Europe.

The long-standing conflict between the Duke of Cumberland and the Prussian Crown has now been finally terminated, the Duke having agreed to his eldest son, Prince George William, receiving a thorough German education, a *sine qua non* condition for his ultimate succession to the Throne of Brunswick. He will now enter the High School of Lübeck, a celebrated German educational establishment, and, on having completed a course there, proceed to a German University, most probably that of Heidelberg.

By far the most extravagant diner in the world is the Sultan of Turkey. His table expenses total up to £1,000 a day, or £365,000 a year. It is the most expensive table and household, in all probability, that any country has ever seen. He is not a sociable man, and very rarely has guests or visitors. The Sultan does not even have a dining-room or dining-hall. Turkish custom among the higher classes is for servants to bring the meals to wherever the diners may be, and in the palace of Stamboul the meals at the dinner hour first search out His Majesty and then in long procession bring in the banquet, table and all.

GREAT care is taken that the little German princes do not become imbued with too early a sense of their own importance. The word of their mentor, Colonel von Deines, is law to them, and must be obeyed unhesitatingly, no matter what private inclination may say; but it is ever the desire of those in authority over them to make study as pleasant and as much of a pastime as possible. Their recreation is never idle or profitless. The Crown Prince is a promising performer on the violin, and finds great pleasure in learning, while another favourite amusement of his is collecting antique coins. Thus he gains much interesting knowledge at the same time. Prince Eitel Fritz devotes his attention during leisure moments to stamps, of which he possesses a large and valuable collection, and from which he also gains useful instruction. Their chief pastime, however, and the one which the Emperor prefers them to indulge in, is the game of war, played with realistic tin soldiers and scenery, over a hundred boxes containing these toys being carried with them wherever they go. First mountains and fortresses are arranged on a large table, and then the troops, representing every regiment in the German army, are placed in battle array, and scientific warfare is practised, while Colonel von Deines and other members of the suite look on and finally express a critical opinion on the skill displayed.

## STATISTICS.

THE consumption of coal in London amounts to 9,709,000 tons a year.

A GRASSHOPPER can spring more than 200 times its own length.

A POUND of cork will sustain in the water a man weighing 154 pounds.

It is estimated that 3,000 marriages are daily performed throughout the world.

THE whole number of doctors in Great Britain is 25,036. Of this number 4,417 are in London, 11,775 on the provincial list, 2,206 in Scotland, 2,430 in Ireland, 1,717 reside abroad, and 2,493 are in the army and navy, the Indian medical and the mercantile marine.

## GEMS.

TRUST, for the overcoming of difficulty, not to long continued study after you have once become bewildered, but to repeated trials at intervals.

No failure can be more utter than that of the parent without love, of the teacher without tenderness, of the master without sympathy, of the philanthropist without compassion.

THE every-day cares and duties, which men call drudgery, are the weights and counterpoises of the clock of time, giving its pendulum a true vibration, and its hands a regular motion.

TO-DAY is never as yesterday; we ourselves change. How can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be the fittest, continue always the same? Change indeed is painful yet ever needful; and, if memory has its force and worth, so also has hope.

HUMAN personality is the flower which all other blossoms hint at and prefigure. There is a June for every soul to fill with its own peculiar life and perfume; a summer wherein the lowliest being may be gladdened with the splendours of the Divine Presence.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CURRENT ICE.—To one pint of currant juice add one pound of sugar and one pint of water. When partly frozen add the whites of three eggs beaten to a stiff froth.

PINEAPPLE ICE.—Pare good, ripe pineapples and cut out the eyes; grate them, and pass the pulp through the colander. To one quart of this add one and a quarter pounds of sugar and one pint of water; beat the whites of two eggs to a stiff froth and add the above little by little, beating well to make them mix, then freeze.

TURBOT A LA CREME.—Three pounds of halibut or cod boiled with plenty of salt; remove the skin and bones, and flake. Boil one bunch of parsley and one large onion in a little water to extract the flavour; take out and thicken with three tablespoonfuls of flour, then add to it one quart of cream and milk together (more cream improves it), and one half cup of butter. Put alternate layers of fish and sauce in a deep, buttered dish (sauce on top), cover with breadcrumbs and bake until brown.

BUNS.—One-quarter cup yeast or one half yeast cake, one-quarter cup warm water, one cup milk scalded and cooled, one tablespoonful sugar, one half teaspoonful salt; mix these thoroughly together, and set in a warm place to rise. When full of bubbles add one egg well beaten, one-quarter cup melted butter, one-half cup currants, one-quarter teaspoonful cinnamon, flour enough to make a stiff dough; knead twenty minutes; let it rise again, and when light shape in small balls and place close together in a pan, and rise again. When ready for oven, glaze over with white of egg and sugar.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

WOMEN have usually better eyesight than men.

INDIAN oak, one of the hardest of woods, will sink in water.

ACCORDING to a recent lecture by a well-known scientist, the safest course for a human being in a thunderstorm is to get thoroughly wet.

THE atmosphere is so clear in Zululand that, it is said, objects can be seen by starlight at a distance of seven miles.

BERLIN is going to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the system of numbering houses, which began there in 1795. Vienna followed in 1808 and Paris in 1805.

POROUS glass is the latest novelty in the Paris market. The holes are so small that neither dust nor draught follows its use, and yet the ventilation is said to be excellent.

IN Korea an unmarried man is treated as a boy, no matter how old he is. A young married man of twenty is, by Korean custom, entitled to be treated as a superior by old bachelors of sixty.

THE largest flower in the world grows in Sumatra. It is called the Rafflesia Arnoldi, and some of the specimens are each thirty-nine inches in diameter. The central cup will hold six quarts of water.

A GERMAN has invented a chemical torch which ignites when wet. It is to be used on life buoys. When one is thrown to a man overboard at night he can thus see the light and find the buoy.

It has been positively demonstrated that tobacco is one of the prime causes of colour blindness; and men who are employed in positions where it is necessary to distinguish colour are cautioned against excessive smoking.

PAPER cans are now being made to take the place of tin cans for preserving food. As tin cans are made and sealed now the danger of poisoning from canned food is reduced to a minimum, but by the use of paper cans it is done away with altogether.

FRENCH chemists have discovered a new amalgam, ninety-four parts copper and six parts antimony, which is declared to be a wonderful substitute for gold. When polished it very closely resembles that material, and can be drawn, wrought and soldered in precisely the same manner.

THE popular idea of bacteria and microbes is that they are enemies to human life. An eminent physician and scientist, in quest of light on this subject, has made some most interesting experiments with small animals. They were kept plentifully supplied with air from which every known form of microbe had, as far as possible, been removed. They were fed on the most carefully sterilized food, and the water given to drink was chemically pure. The consequence of this form of treatment was startling in the extreme. In some cases the animals died within a few hours, a few after the lapse of some weeks, and the majority in a day or two. It was impossible to assign any cause for this, unless it be true, as some theorists believe, that there are benevolent as well as mischievous microbes in the world, and that this beneficent small-fry are necessary to the perpetuation of human life. There are many sorts of microbes or bacteria that act as ferments, and through their means food is assimilated and prepared for absorption. The examination of the animals treated as described showed that the assimilation of food almost entirely ceased when the air and nutriment were deprived of microbic organisms. Of course, at the outset the digestive apparatus of the creatures experimented on must have been full of the usual bacteria, therefore the stock on hand could not be exhausted. It is impossible to find a living creature without its complement of microbic organisms, therefore the conditions are not favourable to positive conclusions. The only possible course of reasoning was that absolutely sterilized air will not sustain life. This is a wide and fertile field for research, and one that enthusiasts are exploring with promises of amazingly interesting results.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

GERTIE B.—1.—No. 2.—Yes; quite legal.

A. O. H.—Yes, you will find it worthy of a trial.

SWIVELLER.—Fourpenny pieces were withdrawn in 1869.

TAOUELEOME.—Neither recommendations nor addresses are over given.

G. E.—The Great Eastern was 692 feet long, and 83 feet wide.

INDEPENDENT.—It could be done, but we should strongly advise legal assistance.

JACKIE.—Dover, Hythe, Romney, Sandwich, and Hastings.

IN TAOULE.—Your best course would be to consult the clergyman of your parish.

WEATHERPE.—Impossible to recover possession of presents by any process of law.

KATRIN.—We fear there is no way of cleaning, or rather, removing the colour of such garments.

M. V.—Amounts in France are all estimated in francs, each worth about twopenny of our money.

'ARRY.—All the Guards' regiments have bands of their own, each celebrated in its own way for excellence.

IMORANT.—The inscription "ARI" is a Greek word, meaning "For ever."

LONG MOOR.—Make a complaint to the Justice of the Peace in your district. Such an annoyance can be made to cease.

ZOE.—That depends upon the safety of their construction. Those that are properly made are harmless enough.

CONSTANT READER.—It is quite natural for the animal to be losing his coat. Give him a good brushing every morning.

BOLAND.—The best stop for a razor is a strip of Russia leather, strained as tight as a drum on a curved or bowed piece of wood.

AMY.—The real name of the authoress who published over the letters A. L. O. E. (a lady of Edinburgh) was Miss Tucker.

R. B.—Roman Catholics are prohibited from marrying first cousins, but it is always easy to get a dispensation from the bishop which permits the marriage.

PUEZLO.—The Gretna Green marriages were thoroughly legal and binding, children issuing from them being in the fullest sense legitimate.

CARLO.—No charge is made for inserting letters in newspapers, but no editor will publish a letter except it deals with a matter of general interest.

G. F.—Do not think of going except you have letters of introduction to people long resident in the place and of good business connection.

ONE IN GREAT THOUGHT.—Yours is a hard case, but we are afraid you have no remedy except you move out of his reach. If he assaults you, then you could call in the assistance of the law.

M. H.—The 3rd regiment of foot, called the Buffs, was raised by the City of London, and is, therefore, allowed to pass through the City with band playing and colours flying.

V. O. G.—Soft soap and Castile soap are sometimes used for the purpose. Probably some special preparation of the former is what you allude to; but to make it is manufacturer's not household work.

REGULAR READER.—Certainly not, but a few are struck along with the penny, twopenny, and threepenny silver pieces called "Mammy money," distributed by the Queen to certain poor people every year; these coins do not come into general circulation.

IN NEED OF ADVICE.—We have no experience in the business you propose to embark in, but may point out that there is much risk in dealing with people who are utter strangers to you upon credit, as must be done in travelling with ready-money goods.

T. S.—London's fire brigade is largely recruited from the Navy. The wages vary from £1 4s. for the fourth class to £1 15s. for the first-class men; while the officers in charge of stations receive from £3 2s. to £3 10s. per week, with rooms, lighting, and firing.

ANNOYED.—Very many of the articles employed in examinations are of foreign origin, and not yet enough used in this country to make it worth while for chemists to keep them in stock. This, perhaps, accounts for the fact that your druggist can give you no information.

INQUIRER.—You must ask "the favour of the company of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So at the marriage of Such-an-One;" if any of their children are desired, a special card must be sent to each, quite independent of the one sent to the father and mother.

M. W.—Of course we are not at liberty to publish doctors' names; but really what you should aim at is admission to an infirmary, where your ailment will be under constant supervision and systematic treatment; cutting may be necessary.

LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—A birth at sea is reported by the captain at the first port he touches where there is a British Consul; that official transmits the record to the Registrar-General of births at London, who in turn causes it to be sent on for registration in the parish of the father's birth.

COMMON.—Civil, as distinguished from mechanical engineering, means the construction of works, railways, harbours, bridges, roads, &c., but not of engines; an apprenticeship to a civil engineer is absolutely essential, as practical knowledge of the work must be obtained.

ANNOYED FATHER.—We should say decidedly that the young man ought on no account to think of going out with his special qualifications to Philadelphia except he carries letters of introduction to individuals likely to be able to assist him to a situation; the demand for draughtsmen is very limited.

INTERESTED.—It is scarcely possible that after one has reached maturity the cultivation of any faculty would be very clearly shown in the shape of the head. Of course, one might improve very much, but it is doubtful if the improvement could be recognised in the way mentioned.

W. G.—Ishmonie, in Upper Egypt, is the place known by this name. It contains a great number of statues of men, women and children; also animals in great number. The popular superstition is that they were once living beings, but were by some miracle changed into stone.

DISPERSED MOTHER.—When young people fall out, which they sometimes do over very trivial and foolish matters, the one who is to blame should make the first overture. If it is a matter of six of one and half a dozen of the other they would do better both to apologise or let each other severely alone in the future.

F. P.—According to an old superstition, to see one crow is unlucky, to see two crows is lucky; three means health, four wealth, five sickness, six death. The Greeks believed that if a crow appeared at a wedding breakfast there would be a divorce among the contracting parties, and to avert this all present roared out, "Maiden scare away the crow."

## LOVES PLEADING.

Dear heart, be not unkind!  
How canst thou thus deny my earnest pleading?  
The hard denial to find,  
Where I had hoped consent would come a speeding.

Be thou as cold as ice:  
I'll bid the sunlight's rays in all their splendour  
With warmth entice,  
Melt thy wayward heart till it surrender.

Send me a message, then,  
A tender word, an emblematic token  
That all is well again,  
And my sweet dream of love can stay unbroken.

Ah, dear heart, don't say nay!  
The present hours are at the best but fleeting.  
Then why not, on our way,  
Pluck life's best flower—the joy of Cupid's greeting?  
V. W.

NORAH.—A delicious filling for sandwiches is made as follows: Chop two tablespoonful of cold ham very fine, reduce the yolk of one hard-boiled egg to powder, add a dash of catsup, pepper, salt, and the merest hint of onion juice. Mix all the ingredients into a paste, with the white of an egg chopped coarsely and sprinkled in. This is enough for three sandwiches.

E. R.—Descending from a balloon by a parachute is dangerous only in the case of persons who have not practised it or are unacquainted with the theory of the movement; with those who are familiar with the manner of descending there is practically no more danger than there is in descending from a height by a ladder.

GIRY.—A cup of coffee is thus used to foretell the weather; drop two lumps of sugar carefully into the middle of the cup; if the air bubbles remain in the centre of the cup, the weather will be fine; if they rise rapidly and go at once to the sides, it will rain all day; if they gather in the centre and then go in a cluster to one side prepare for showers.

CHARLIE.—The "Black Watch" was the name popularly given to the Highland companies formed to prevent Jacobite rebellion in the Highlands, and was intended to distinguish them from King George's soldiers of the regular army, who were called "red;" the dark colour of the tartan worn by the Watch was also recognised in the term "Black."

THIRTY.—Two quarts of raspberries, one cup of sugar, one pint and a half of water, the juice of a large lemon, one tablespoonful of gelatine. Wash the berries and sugar together and let them stand two hours. Soak the gelatine in cold water to cover. Add one pint of water to the berries and strain. Dissolve the gelatine in half the water, add this to the strained mixture and freeze.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—One way of cooking spinach is to wash and drain it, and put it into a saucepan, which cover without putting any water with it. Let it remain until done. Take it out and chop it up fine and return it to the saucepan with cream and butter. Serve it up on toast with poached eggs upon the top of it.

T. B.—Add a little borax and turpentine to cold water starch to glass glossing iron; slightly damp the linen by passing a damp rag over it, then apply the round iron; it should be hot, and swiftly rubbed all over; it does not matter when it is applied, either at once or some time after the linen has been ironed in the usual way.

DOWNY OWL.—The only thing we can recommend you to do is to take it to pieces, boil the wool well, then dry it perfectly and pull it out soft, and having boiled the cover also and dried it, re-pack and stitch it in. The wool should be well dried in the sun and beaten with a stick before you pull it. We have seen them re-made as good as new in this way.

MAG.—Lettuce can be kept crisp and fresh for several days if necessary by placing the roots in water. Do not let the water come up as high as the leaves. When ready to serve the lettuce wash it, lay by leaf, in a pan of cold water, and drop each leaf into another pan of ice water. It will become crisp in a few minutes. Shake the water from the leaves before serving.

INQUIRER.—Niobe was the daughter of Tantalus and wife of Amphion, king of Thebes. She had six sons and six daughters, of whom she was exceedingly proud. This vanity displeased Apollo, and Diana and all of the children were slain. Niobe wandered over the surface of the earth, desolate and in despair, and was by the gods finally changed into stone.

IN A FIX.—If she told you that she could never be more than a friend to you why do you not at the first opportunity kindly and firmly tell her that you have met one of your early loves and wish to marry her? Say this in an off-hand fashion, which will be a sufficient leader to the grand culmination. If she asks for further information, answer according to the facts in the case.

AN OLD LOVER OF THE "L. R."—1.—We are afraid the I.O.U. you hold is valueless, and you could not recover on it, as it should have been stamped. If you can prove your claim in any other way it might be worth while summoning the man. 2.—Salts of lemon would remove the paint, and, we are afraid, the colour also. Try what a little turpentine rubbed over the place would do.

JOHN ANDERSON.—Dissolve two pounds of alum in three quarts of water; let it remain till the alum is dissolved, then with a brush apply holding hot to every joint and crevice in the place where bugs, earwigs, or other insects infest; brush all the joints and crevices of bedsteads; keep it boiling whilst using; a strong boiling hot tea of cayenne used with a brush is also a capital remedy.

DISPERADO.—We say at once there is no place to which you can apply with any hope of being accepted to work your passage out to Australia, but considering the present unsatisfactory condition of trade out there we think you need not be very sorry on that account; of course, if you were to write to the shore steward of any line or company he might engage you as assistant steward aboard; your training fits you for that.

ROVER.—The popular stories of the great value of the farthing itself are fabulous. The pattern with the broad brim, when in fine preservation is worth about £1. The common patterns of 1713 and 1714 are worth about 10s. each. The two patterns with Britannia under a canopy, and Peace on a car, R. B. R., are worth about £3 each, the pattern, with Peace in a car is considered more valuable, and has brought as much as £5.

FANNY.—Strong vinegar and the gall of an ox mixed together and rubbed in the joints of a bedstead and cracks where the vermin lurk will kill them, or boil glue and vinegar together, rub as above and that will destroy them; to prevent them coming again, take strong vinegar and mix with salt, then sprinkle the room with it; it will prevent both bugs and fleas, and is very wholesome in houses.

C. K.—There is only one way of preserving botanical specimens—that is, by pressing them between the layers of blotting paper under a heavy weight; of course due care should be taken to distill them out into the most pressurable form before the pressure is applied; no elaborate machinery is necessary; the plants may be put between the leaves of a big book, and a bigger one still laid on the top of the first when it is closed.

VAR.—A quarter of a pound of castor sugar, two ounces each tartaric acid, cream of tartar, carbonate of soda, and Epsom salts. Each of the powders must be thoroughly and separately dried on warm plates before the fire, and crushed to the finest powder. When this is dried and crushed mix them well together, then sift them twice through dry warm muslin and bottle in perfectly dry bottles. Cork securely to exclude air, and keep in a dry place. About a teaspoonful stirred into hot tumbler of water, which may be either hot or cold, makes the effervescent draught. Absolute dryness in making is necessary, or the whole will be formed into a solid block.

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